

Good girl makes bad
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No cash for those who refuse jobs

'Workfare' testing for state benefits

By JIEL SHERMAN, CHIEF POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

ALL benefit claimants, including the disabled and lone parents, will be denied any State help unless they attend job interviews under radical reforms to be announced by the Government today.

All claimants of working age, except the disabled and lone parents, will then have to take up a job offer or face losing their entire benefit under proposals that take Britain a step closer to the American Workfare system.

David Blunkett, the Education Secretary, and Alistair Darling, the Social Security Secretary, will today announce an £80 million programme to test the scheme in 12 pilot studies across the country. Four of the trials will be run by private firms to assess potential administrative savings.

The pilots will be voluntary, covering about 450,000 people over three years. But the Workfare Reform Bill, announced in The Queen's Speech, will include measures to allow the Government to set up a nationwide compulsory scheme within a year.

All potential claimants who attend interviews will have their own personal adviser under the 'single gateway' scheme who will assess their entitlement to the whole range of benefits including housing benefit, income support and disability benefits.

Ministers bracing themselves for an internal party backlash, have until now been cautious about the extent of benefit penalties. But yesterday, Whitehall sources disclosed that no payments would be made unless people turned up for a job interview.

The twin aim is to reduce dependency on the State for all those capable of work and to cut down on benefit fraud.

"Work for those who can and security for those who cannot," said one source last night. "The interview will be a pre-condition for getting benefit."

The source denied that the Government was considering compelling the disabled and lone parents to take up jobs but suggested that the proposals could be extended to require these people to attend repeat interviews.

The Prime Minister is believed to be anticipating a backlash against Mr. Darling's proposals to restrict disability benefits, including more rigorous 'medical' tests for those claiming incapacity benefit, and cuts on widows' benefits, which are also contained in the Bill.

In addition the Social Security Department angered the Royal British Legion yesterday by announcing that it would not repeal Conservative cutbacks to payments given to deaf servicemen, although Labour had attacked this in Opposition.

A spokeswoman said that the Government was following medical advice, after an 18-month review, that deterioration of hearing when people got older could not be attributed to injury suffered in service.

The extra £80 million announced by the Government for the single gateway scheme will be spent on recruiting and training personal advisers.

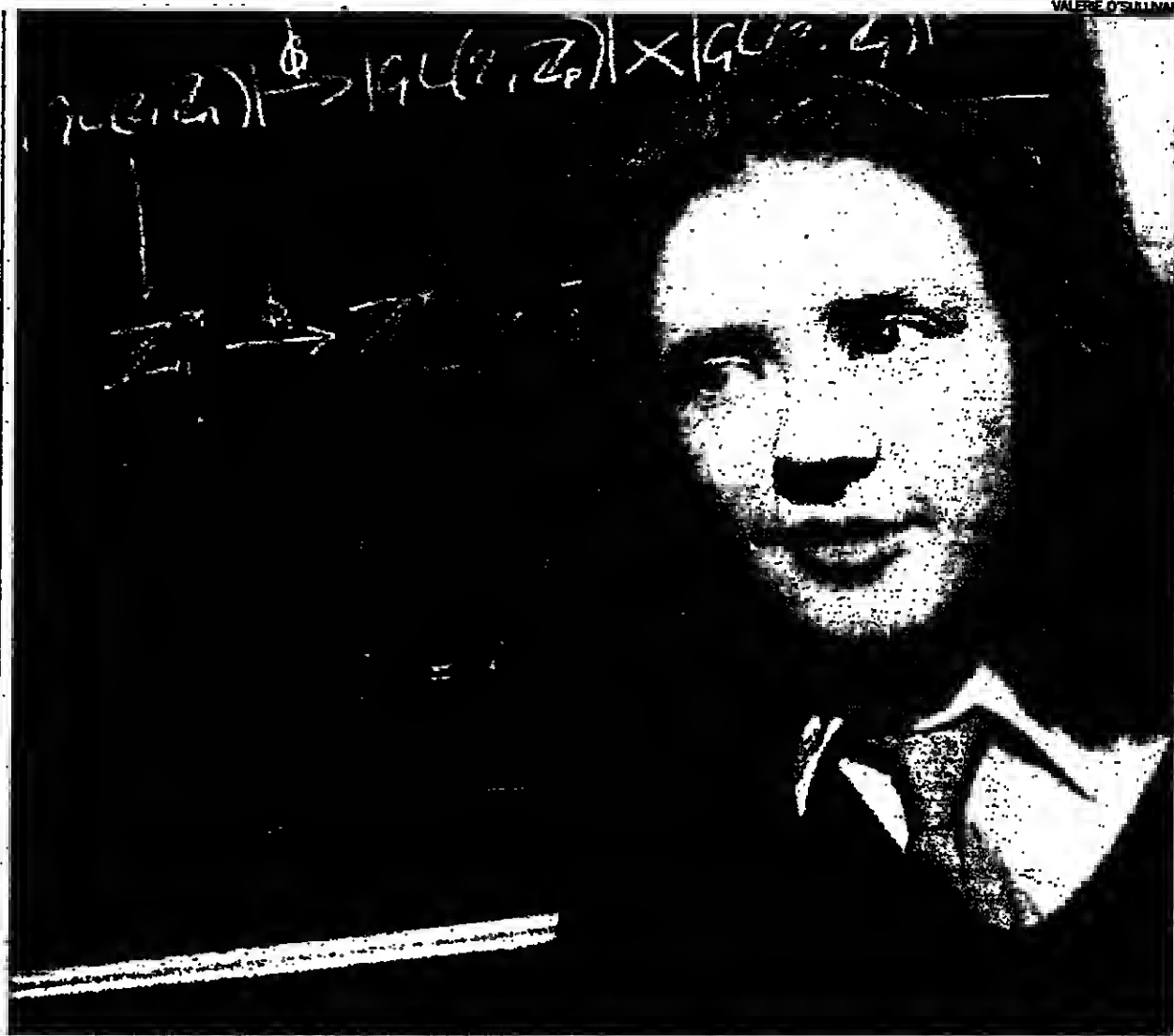
Four pilots will start in April in Essex, Warwickshire, Clyde Coast and Renfrew, and Lea Roding — covering East London. The remainder will be set up from next November. The privately managed pilots will cover Suffolk, Leeds, North Devon and North Nottinghamshire, and four other Government trials will run in Somerset, Gwent Borders, Calderdale and Kirkcaldy and Bockinghamshire.

Education officials stressed that there would be exemptions for the recently bereaved and those who are severely disabled and cannot turn up for an interview.

Whitehall sources said the argument for compelling people to attend interviews followed evidence that voluntary pilots had failed to attract claimants.

"Once people do turn up for an interview, however, many of them go on to get a job," said one source.

Leading article, page 19



Sarah Flannery, 16, who baffled the judges with her grasp of cryptography. They described her work as "brilliant"

Teenager cracks e-mail code

By AUDREY MAGKE, IRELAND CORRESPONDENT

AN Irish schoolgirl was yesterday hailed as a mathematical genius after devising a code for sending secret messages by computer.

Sarah Flannery used the science of cryptography to design a code that is ten times faster than the one currently used to convert confidential information so that it can be sent via the Internet and e-mail. She has been inundated with offers of jobs and scholarships from international computer companies and universities.

Miss Flannery, 16, from

Blarney, Co. Cork, used matrices to formulate an alternative to RSA, the current data protection code, devised by three students at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1977. The result is an algorithm, a mathematical blueprint, that is far faster than the RSA and equally secure.

Miss Flannery, whose father, David, lectures in mathematics at Cork Institute of Technology, devised her code to enter the Irish Young Scientists and Technology Exhibition. She won at the weekend

and left the judges unable fully to comprehend her project. They described her work as "brilliant" and one judge advised her to patent it.

Miss Flannery said she was thrilled. "I had to go through lots of stuff before I finalised the theory," she said. "I reached critical points where I would get stuck for three weeks or so. I just kept thinking about it and then the whole thing slipped into place." The oldest of five children, she earned eight As in her junior certificate, the Irish

equivalent of GCSEs, with extra tuition from her father.

Miss Flannery is now deciding what to do with her new code. The Cayley-Purser, named after Arthur Cayley, an eminent 19th-century Cambridge mathematician, and Michael Purser, a cryptographer who inspired her. She is considering publishing her findings rather than patenting as she does not want people to pay for her discovery.

She will represent Ireland at the EU Science Contest in Greece in September.

Freetown burns as rebels slaughter hundreds

FROM SAM KILEY IN FREETOWN

HUNDREDS of Ukrainian mercenaries are fighting alongside Sierra Leone's rebels who yesterday made good on their promise to burn Freetown, the capital, to the ground and torch the power station, post office, town hall and United Nations headquarters.

West African peacekeepers continued to try to drive the rebels from the centre of the city, and claimed that they were conducting "mopping up operations". But yesterday afternoon, the city was in flames.

Huge columns of smoke billowed as the last of the once elegant Creole architecture of the freed slave colony were set alight, along with colonial-era government buildings.

Hundreds of bodies, many of them victims of summary execution by the rebels led by Sam "Mosquito" Bockarie, lay rotting in the streets while the Red Cross struggled to get medical supplies in.

"The situation is extremely dangerous. It changes from one moment to another, and the rebels have totally changed. This time around they are using clever infiltration techniques," said a resident of Freetown desperately waiting for a helicopter to evacuate him from the western fringes which are under control of Nigerian-led forces.

The Ukrainians have not yet been seen in Freetown. But sources independent of the Ecomog (West African) soldiers said about 300 Ukrainians were spotted in Makeni, 100 miles from the capital which fell to the rebels two weeks ago, and they were camouflaged with black cream.

'Secret link', page 14

New sentences for burglars

Jack Straw brought in the Tories' plans for automatic minimum sentences for three-time burglars. They mean a burglar could be in jail for just 16 months with automatic remission and early release on current law. Page 2

Trade war threat

A global trade war came close when America failed to resolve a dispute with Europe over banana imports and threatened sanctions on Japan over steel. Page 23

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Yemeni kidnap leader 'faces death penalty'

By DANIEL MCGRORY IN ADEN AND STEPHEN FARRELL



Marathon hero Jim Peters dies

Jim Peters, the British runner who collapsed in the 1954 Empire Games marathon in Vancouver, has died aged 80. As he started the final lap he led by more than three miles, but despite a valiant struggle, he never crossed the finishing line. Pages 24, 44

THE leader of the Islamic kidnap gang, which abducted 16 Western tourists in a desert ambush is to go on trial for his life today in a high-security Yemeni court.

The bereaved families of three Britons killed during a shootout with security forces are likely to be asked if they wish to spare Abu Hassan's life.

As the surviving hostages gather for the cremation of one of the victims, Margaret Whitmore, 52, Mr Hassan is also being accused of training and arming five Britons being held for allegedly plotting to bomb an international hotel and the British Consulate.

The Yemenis claim that four days after the Britons were arrested in police raids, Mr Hassan, 28, ambushed the first party to barter for the release of those jailed in Aden.

The lawyer for the five Britons, Salim Basunaid, said last

night: "My fear is that Abu Hassan's trial will incriminate my clients and yet they still have not been charged let alone had a chance to explain why they were in Aden."

Mr Basunaid has still not been allowed to see the five but has been handed police files which claim the men confessed to meeting Mr Hassan at his terrorist camp where they were given TNT explosives and weapons. The lawyer insists these confessions were made under torture.

Scotland Yard is still investigating claims the five were sent on their bombing mission by the London-based Muslim cleric, Abu Hamza, whose extremist Supporters of Shariah group runs a website depicting a hand grenade and advertising military training courses.

The Yard has joined forces with the FBI to explore suggested links between SOS and the

wanted terrorist billionaire, Osama bin Laden. Security sources claim that Bin Laden, who is hiding in Afghanistan, has helped fund the London-based SOS. They also believe four of those being held in the Central Security Headquarters in Aden are personally linked to the cleric, including Mohamed Chailan, who allegedly confessed to receiving \$2,000 (£1,200) from SOS to take part in this operation.

Legal sources in Yemen said Mr Hassan and two others captured in the bungled rescue are certain to face the death penalty if found guilty which, under a new law, is mandatory for kidnapping.

Last night Mr Whitehouse, 54, from Hook, Hampshire, was unable to discuss whether he would call for the death penalty or "blood money" to pardon Mr Hassan.

Mosque inquiry, page 5



Reprieve for Ashworth

Frank Dobson, the Health Secretary, decided to keep Ashworth Special Hospital in Merseyside open despite a damning public inquiry report on the hospital at the centre of a paedophilia and pornography scandal.

Inquiry members and mental health groups immediately criticised the move. The charity Mind felt he had ducked a "brave challenge". Page 2

Software stops pupils seeing Net porn

By JOHN O'LEARY, EDUCATION EDITOR

SCHOOLS are to be offered a powerful screening system developed by America's space scientists which blocks pupils' access to Internet pornography even if otherwise innocent documents and e-mail messages.

The software, being launched today in an educational technology exhibition, is used widely in the United States, where it spared teachers the embarrassment of answering questions on the more salacious sections of the Starr Report on President Clinton.

While most school filtering devices allowed pupils access to the full report, published on recognised sites such as that of the White House, those using URLabs' i-Geat package found descriptions of his sexual encounters censored.

URLabs, the British computer company, will launch a new version of the package, which includes e-mail screening, at Olympia in London this morning. It is already in use in some Scottish schools and will be installed in all Hertfordshire state schools this spring.

Tony Blair wants all 32,000 British schools to be connected to the World Wide Web by 2002, and the Govern-

ment is pouring millions into the development of a National Grid for Learning. But concerns about Internet pornography and undesirable e-mail traffic have dissuaded many schools from making use of the technology.

Most British schools use filters to block access to sites known to contain unsuitable material. The software will enable them to set their own censorship criteria.

Dan Sydow, who developed the software after more than ten years' working for the Nass space agency, said: "The programme is particularly powerful because it looks at the context

as well as the words used. The inclusion of e-mail is important because schools have intercepted everything from bomb-making instructions to messages from stalkers."

Mr Sydow added: "Sexually explicit or violent material is what most schools are concerned about, but some users might want to block access to Internet shopping."

Internet filtering has become big business in America: it was worth more than \$14 million (£8.5 million) in 1997. In Britain the new package will cost about £1,000 a school, but it is being bought mainly by local authorities.

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Morose visage lets old Labour flavour flood out

There was Gordon Prentice (Pendle, 47) for the hardish Left, Peter Pike (Burnley, 61).

Junior minister Hilary Armstrong muddled her words yesterday, turning 'capping criteria' into 'crapping criteria' and narrowly avoiding disaster with 'crude and universal capping'. Prescott almost grinned. Something's cheered him up.

The Fallon report revealed a security regime in Ashworth's Personality Disorder Unit so lax that it became "a place where normal rules did not apply". Convicted sex offenders were allowed easy access to pornography.

"At first I was ridiculed because people simply could not get their head around what I was telling them. I only hope the authorities can now allow me to get on with my clinical agenda."

Daggett was convicted in 1986 of three indecent assaults against young girls.

Attitudes to security was "farical", and managers at

The inquiry's 58 recommendations also included a proposal to treat offenders with untreatable personality disorders.

At present the average sentence for a third-time burglar is approximately two years, meaning they are out after 12 months.

Mr. Lawson issued a brief statement at the time stressing: "I am not and never have been an agent, either paid or

Mr Lawson. "I would hope we would have some time between now and Christmas to look at the claim that Dominic Lawson has been recruited as a paid M16 agent," he said.

The Times has been criticised by the Advertising Standards Authority for using an advertisement which featured a picture of a woman in a bikini tied to a wooden cross. The advertisement, for a six part photographic series in *The Sunday Times Magazine* on the work of photographer Terry O'Neill, was the subject of 140 complaints from readers who protested that it was "tasteless, provocative and blasphemous to Christians."

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Emotional plea by foster girls couple

Runaways send letter pleading 'Let us be a family,' reports Alex O'Connell

THE couple on the run with their foster daughters have written an emotional letter pleading to be allowed to adopt the girls.

In a letter sent to Anglia Television, Jeff and Jennifer Bramley urged police and social services to let them live as a family with the two girls.

The letter was handwritten in blue ink on lined paper and posted first class on Monday in Nottingham.

The couple left their home at Ramsey, Cambridgeshire, with Jade Bennett, 5, and her sister Hannah, 3, in September. The Bramleys, who have looked after the girls since March, fled in the belief that the children would be taken away from them by Cambridgeshire social services.

Mr Bramley, a Royal Mail worker in Peterborough, told his office he was not coming to work because he was ill.

The couple wrote: "We Jeff, Jenny, Jade and Hannah write this letter to tell the plight of a family that love each other and wishes to stay together."

"Jade and Hannah were told about us and told we would be their forever Mummy and Daddy, after we had met the girls several times in their foster home, they came to live with us. They soon grew to love us as their Mummy and Daddy, as we grew to love

them as our daughters. Jade and Hannah were looking forward to their new lives with us."

The couple, who plead for understanding, write: "We are two good, honest, caring people who are willing to give up our home, our family and friends and jobs to maintain Jade and Hannah's happiness in keeping them with the parents they love and desperately want to share their lives with."

"We want the voices of our children to be heard. We were approved to be Jade and Hannah's new Mummy and Daddy, they were placed with us for us to adopt. It is misleading to call us foster parents."

"Social services seemed pleased with us and told us eve-

rything was fine until one day they said we were too safety conscious by saying 'no' and 'don't' too often."

"The children have been told by Social Services that they are to move on to another forever Mummy and Daddy."

In the letter the Bramleys say how Jade, who liked dancing, was very much looking forward to going to school. Hannah, the couple write, has enjoyed sessions at playgroup and was looking forward to going regularly.

"Jade and Hannah have cried, saying they love us and don't want to live with anyone else and that if anyone comes to take them away they will hold on to us, not letting go."

The letter concludes: "Jade

and Hannah are two bright, intelligent, articulate children who love us with all their hearts. We ask therefore, will someone help us to be legally their Mummy and Daddy forever, making the hopes and dreams of these two wonderful girls come true?"

The letter is unsigned. Police, who held back five paragraphs of the full letter for their investigations, are taking the communication seriously because it contains information only the Bramleys would know. Copies of the letter were also sent to The Express newspaper and a local paper.

Although Cambridgeshire social services said that they did not think that the couple would harm the children, they were concerned because they believed the Bramleys were highly distressed.

The letter was sent as the hunt for the Bramleys intensified after a potential sighting of the couple on the North Yorkshire Railway between Pickering and Grosmont. A vicar told police of how he spotted a girl he thought was Jade Bennett, screaming on the train.

The Rev Jack Cooper said at the time: "The children were a nuisance and disturbing passengers. The parents made no attempt to stop them."

The couple's car was found abandoned in York.



Jeff and Jenny Bramley with Jade, left, and Hannah



Jemima Khan, who sent the 397 tiles to her mother as a Christmas present

Imran says wife will fight 'fake' charge

By CLAUDIA JOSEPH AND ZAHID HUSSAIN

JEMIMA KHAN has been charged in Pakistan with illegally exporting hundreds of antique tiles after the confiscation of a Christmas gift to her mother by customs officers.

Mrs Khan, who has not been arrested and is currently in Britain, faces a six-month prison sentence and £60 fine if convicted.

Yesterday her husband, Imran Khan, the former cricketer, who formed Pakistan's Movement for Justice party, accused the Government of political victimisation. "The case is fake," said Mr Khan, 46.

"I will file a defamation case against the customs department, which has become a tool in the hands of the Government in victimising political opponents."

Mrs Khan, 24, daughter of the late Sir James Goldsmith, had sent the 397 tiles to her mother in December when they were intercepted by customs officials. She said that the shipment, which she had bought in a market in Islamabad, was lawful because she had a receipt stating that the tiles were less than 50 years old.

Customs officials said that they had referred the tiles to the local archaeological department which had declared that they were "of paramount archaeological interest and belonged to the Islamic era". They claim the tiles were originally stolen from an archaeological site.

Blackmailer 'bled banker of £500,000'

By PAUL WILKINSON

A BLACKMAILER bled a shy, respected country bank manager of almost £500,000 over nearly 20 years, through threats to tell his wife about the time he bought a set of pornographic videos, a court was told yesterday.

By the time Brian Crossling was arrested in July 1997, he had allegedly taken £449,500 from his victim. Over the years the manager, now aged nearly 70 and retired, had sold his luxury house for a smaller one, remortgaged that, cashed in his wife's investments and lied to friends to get money for Crossling, the court was told.

The manager, identified to Newcastle Crown Court yesterday only as Mr X, also handed over a £92,000 lump sum that he received when he took early retirement in the mid 1980s, and ran up a £42,000 overdraft. He even contemplated suicide to escape Crossling's incessant demands.

His secret eventually came out in June 1997, when he was arrested by detectives investigating claims that he was trying to defraud his friends. Under questioning, Mr X claimed that Crossling had goaded him by saying the money had been used to set up a company dealing in pornographic videos and to buy drugs.

Robert Woodcock, prosecuting, said that Crossling lived alone in a house he owned himself. He had no other means of support. When police searched his house they found £73,000 in cash under the kitchen sink and he had also salted away in building society accounts £250,000. We say none of this was lawfully his," Crossling, 40, from Rod-

dymoor, near Crook, Co Durham, denies blackmail.

Mr Woodcock, who described Mr X as a man thoroughly respected in his community, said: "It started in 1978 when Mr X answered an advert in a newspaper for pornographic videos. Mr X bought a couple of them but nothing happened until he decided to buy some more from the same source."

"He then met Mr Crossling. Crossling asked him for a loan of money, saying he was going to start a company selling porn videos to coach companies. Mr X was content to lend the money, but Crossling, detecting the ease which a virtual stranger had handed over cash, realised what an easy touch he was."

Mr Woodcock said that Mr X eventually turned to friends for help. One gave him £40,000 in 1994, £21,000 in 1995 and £10,000 in 1997. An elderly lady gave him four sums totalling £63,000 in 1997 after Mr X claimed he needed urgent medical treatment.

In court Mr X said: "The pressure began at the start when I bought the videos as I did not want him to tell my wife. I also didn't want him to tell my wife he was a big-time drug dealer and police informant in Blackpool. He would say 'Would you like me to tell your wife about this?' It was a form of blackmail."

Mr X said that he had borrowed more than £220,000 from friends and relatives. "Most of it was because of pressure from Mr Crossling. I would not have loaned him any otherwise," he said. The trial continues.

20 stitches for nurse attacked with glass

By HELEN JOHNSTONE

A NURSE who needed more than 20 stitches after a patient attacked her with a broken mirror in a hospital ward has vowed to return to work. Roz Hanson, 30 and a nurse for seven years, said yesterday: "Things like this come with the job. I'll be back at work within a few days."

The mother of one was close to tears as she described how she thought she would die as the patient turned violent as she treated him for a minor cut to his arm on the casualty ward at Kings Mill Hospital, Sutton in Ashfield, Nottinghamshire.

"The attack has not changed my view of nursing. He was ill and I could have come across him at any time. I am a lot better now, but it was very frightening at the time."

"Occasionally we have episodes that occur, spontaneous outbursts that might cause concern, but generally I feel safe to come to work. It occurs with the job because of the nature of the patients we look after. It is difficult to predict situations."

The patient broke furniture and smashed a mirror before attacking Mrs Hanson with pieces of broken glass. He plunged a shard into her arm before stabbing her in the back as she tried to flee.

He was overpowered by a male nurse and a female colleague who held him until police arrived. Mrs Hanson was taken to the hospital's accident and emergency department where she needed 18 stitches to her back and five to her arm. A 29-year-old man was yesterday remanded in custody by Mansfield Magistrates accused of causing Mrs Hanson grievous bodily harm.

Port admits liability for Milford Haven oil spill

By SIMON DE BRUNELLES

A PORT authority yesterday admitted liability in an oil spill that contaminated 120 miles of Welsh coast.

The oil tanker *Sea Empress* ran aground at the entrance to the Milford Haven estuary in west Wales while under the control of an inexperienced pilot three years ago.

More than 72,000 tonnes of crude oil leaked from the vessel's tanks, killing thousands of sea birds, seals and other marine creatures. Fishing and tourism in the region were also badly affected.

Milford Haven Port Authority, which employed the pilot, yesterday pleaded guilty to "causing polluting matter to enter controlled waters of Milford Haven and the south west Wales coast" at a hearing at Cardiff Crown Court. The pen-

alty under the Water Resources Act is an unlimited fine.

The court was told that the clean-up operation cost £60 million and the final bill, including compensation for losses sustained by the fishing and tourism industries, is likely to exceed £100 million.

Michael Hill, QC, prosecuting, said that the *Sea Empress*, carrying 136,000 tonnes of North Sea crude to a refinery, was "significantly bigger physically than her deadweight tonnage would have indicated."

In March 1991 the port authority had dropped a requirement for two pilots to be on vessels below 150,000 tonnes. At 147,000 tonnes, the *Sea Empress* just escaped classification as a "Very Large Crude Carrier" and the authority considered John Pearn, a class

two pilot, to be qualified to guide the *Sea Empress* into port on his own.

Cardiff Crown Court heard that entering Milford Haven is potentially dangerous due to its narrow entrance, strong tides and weather patterns.

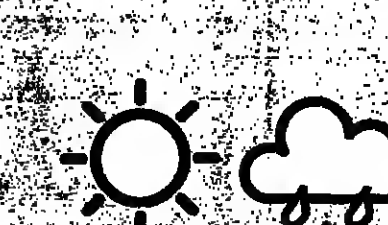
Mr Hill said: "The entrance requires careful navigation by a sufficiently trained and experienced pilot. Mr Pearn had never before attempted to bring to shore a vessel comparable in size to the *Sea Empress* so close to low water."

The court was told that the port authority had agreed to pay the legal costs of the Environment Agency, which brought the prosecution, of £825,000. Mr Hill called for "maximum financial penalties" because of the scale of the pollution. The case continues.

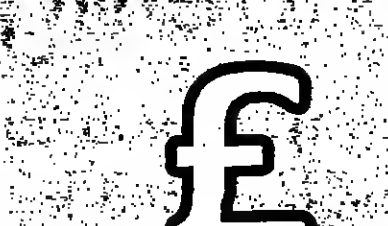
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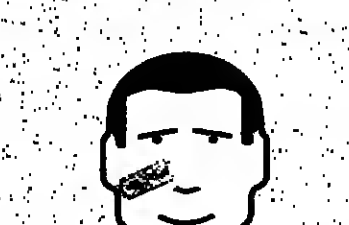
Finally, there's 24-hour telephone banking as well, allowing you to do anything from paying bills to checking your balance. 7 days a week, you can also pay money in at any branch of The Royal Bank of Scotland. It couldn't be simpler. So if you save, or are about to buy, a home with a mortgage of at least £20,000, call us to find out if the One account's right for you.

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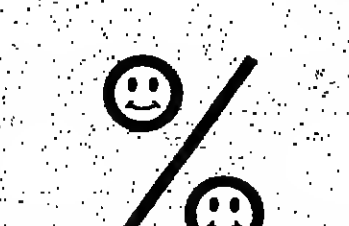


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Second radical group is linked to mosque

THE London mosque at the centre of international police investigations into a plot to bomb British targets in Yemen has become a magnet for radical groups.

It emerged yesterday that a second Muslim organisation that endorses violence has strong links with the Finsbury Park mosque.

Sheikh Omar Bakri Mohammed, whose group, Al Muhajiroun, believes in resistance by Muslims against the United States and Britain, is a former leader of the mosque. Its current leader, Abu Hamza, a close friend of Sheikh Bakri, runs his own extreme organisation, Supporters of Shariah, from the building. Abu Hamza is being monitored by several intelligence agencies.

Sheikh Bakri said yesterday that he had taught four of the young British Muslims arrested in Yemen for allegedly plotting to bomb British targets. He also said money raised at the mosque was used to fund "legal resistance" by Muslim groups in Kashmir, Palestine, Kosovo and Bosnia.

According to Sheikh Bakri, Mr Hamza, who lost his hands and the sight in one eye while fighting in Afghanistan, receives a disability allowance from the British Government.

Up to 1,000 people are said to attend weekly prayers led by Mr Hamza, after which donations are made. It is not uncommon for Muslim businessmen to make single donations of £5,000 to their local mosques. More money is raised during Ramadan, when worshippers pay an additional £3 per family member to the mosque. Those with savings of more than £750 must pay 25 per cent of their total wealth each year to the mosque. Some of the cash goes to charity. Asked if any money went to fund opposition to the

Leader advocates resistance against Britain, report Adrian Lee, Stephen Farrell and Dominic Kennedy

United States, Sheikh Bakri said: "It is up to Abu Hamza where it goes."

Sheikh Bakri, 40, visited the Finsbury Park mosque last week to attend a prayer night. His group, Al Muhajiroun, which campaigns for a single Muslim state, lists one of its aims as demonstrating "against the British authority... and the policies of the British Government." It states on its website: "British man-made law is war against God... Islam will dominate the whole world."

In the past Sheikh Bakri has made outspoken attacks on homosexuals, claimed that the Holocaust was a fabrication, and justified the bombings of American targets in Africa, but regretting the deaths of people. He was interviewed by Special Branch in the early 1990s for allegedly calling for the assassination of John Major. He denied the allegation and was never charged.

Although he opposed the kidnapping and killing of Britons, Sheikh Bakri, who holds a British passport, said yesterday that he supported action against British and American targets in the Middle East. He said: "We have the right to retaliate. I don't call it violence, it is the divine right to fight back. Muslims must resist."

Sheikh Bakri said that he had met several of the British Muslims who are under arrest in Yemen while he was teaching in Birmingham.

"Yes, I know them personally. I taught them Islam, jurisprudence and foreign policy. They are intellectual people, peaceful young men." He said they were not members of Al

Muhajiroun and he had not advised them to travel to Yemen.

Sheikh Bakri's links with the Finsbury Park mosque and the activities of Mr Hamza, who has organised camps there at which military skills were taught to young men, is causing alarm among many moderate Muslims.

One senior Muslim academic said that he was offended that camps, involving military training, were taking place at the mosque. He said he had never heard of such activities at other mosques in Britain.

It is understood that police have recently investigated the camps and decided that they were not illegal. They are advertised on a website, which depicts a hand grenade. Yesterday the website provider, Islamic Gateway, which offers free Internet space to a wide range of Muslim organisations, said that it would re-

move the grenade graphic and reference to military training. Abdul-Rahman al-Adhami, Islamic Gateway's co-ordinator, said: "We think this is beyond the limits that we have agreed with the Supporters of Shariah. We do not support, or have any contact with that organisation other than providing web space."

Another Muslim, aged 24, who asked not to be named, said he had visited the Finsbury Park mosque and found the atmosphere intimidating. "Abu Hamza is a difficult man. He thinks the way of Islam is to fight. They teach people to hate people. I think 70 per cent of Muslims would like to see this man removed."

Mr Hamza said yesterday that he expected to be questioned by police over his links with the five Britons arrested in Yemen. He refused to comment further, saying he would add nothing more until Ramadan ended. His stepson is one of those under arrest, and his natural son is on the run and wanted by the authorities in Yemen.

Leading article, page 19



Sheikh Bakri is a former leader of Finsbury Park mosque, which has been used to give young Muslims military training

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Monica Davis, wife of Ghulam Hussein, one of the men held in Yemen, at a press conference yesterday.

Law provides a haven for radicals

By MICHAEL BINYON, DIPLOMATIC EDITOR

LONDON'S reputation as a haven for Islamic extremists has been given embarrassing reinforcement by the allegations against the British Muslims detained in Yemen and the calls for the overthrow of the Yemeni Government from North London mosque.

Britain has come under growing pressure in the past five years to clamp down on the Islamic groups that have proliferated in this country, some of which are accused of masterminding terrorist actions in the Middle East.

Algeria, Egypt, Turkey, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia and several Gulf states have accused Britain of turning a blind eye to extremists who have fled here to continue their political activities while seeking asylum. Their governments have demanded a sharp crackdown on dissident exiles and have accused Britain of hypocrisy in tolerating the plotting of violent actions against friendly governments and even against Western interests.

In response, the Government rushed through a new law on the back of last year's emergency terrorist legislation after the Omagh bombing. For the first time this made it an offence to plot terrorist activity abroad or to collect money to support foreign terrorists. The law does not prohibit the promotion or incitement to terrorism, unlike previous legislation. Coercive legislation, because of the difficulties of definition and Britain's tradition of free speech.

Nevertheless, the Government has come under strong pressure to clamp down, especially after French claims that

the bombings of the Paris Metro may have been masterminded by London-based supporters of the Algerian extremist Islamic Armed Group (GIA). Arab governments claimed that a network of extremist groups in Britain was supporting each other, and that one group, "al-Ansar" (The Helpers), was circulating pamphlets in North London mosques calling for the killing of foreigners in Algeria.

Fresh accusations were levelled at Britain by Egypt after the Luxor bombings, which Cairo said were inspired by Egyptian extremist exiles in London. In reply Britain promised to share intelligence information with Cairo and to keep a close watch on known extremist groups.

John Major told Arab ambassadors in London three years ago that Islamic extremists were not welcome here, and he also reassured President Chirac that security surveillance of such groups would be stepped up.

The issue came to a head with the proposal for a "Rally for Revival" of radical Islamic groups at the London Arena in September 1996. This followed two earlier rallies at Wembley which led to demonstrations by Jewish and homosexual groups that accused the radicals of inciting hatred.

The organisers proposed inviting well-known radicals, including Osama bin Laden. Several Arab governments threatened retaliatory action and the cancellation of contracts with Britain if the rally went ahead. It was eventually cancelled because the organisers could not get insurance cover.

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Coastline is on edge of collapse

Experts fear that the Beachy Head collapse will be followed by others, reports Nick Nuttall

THE Government was yesterday told to act urgently to counter the danger of further coastal erosion in the wake of the landslide at Beachy Head.

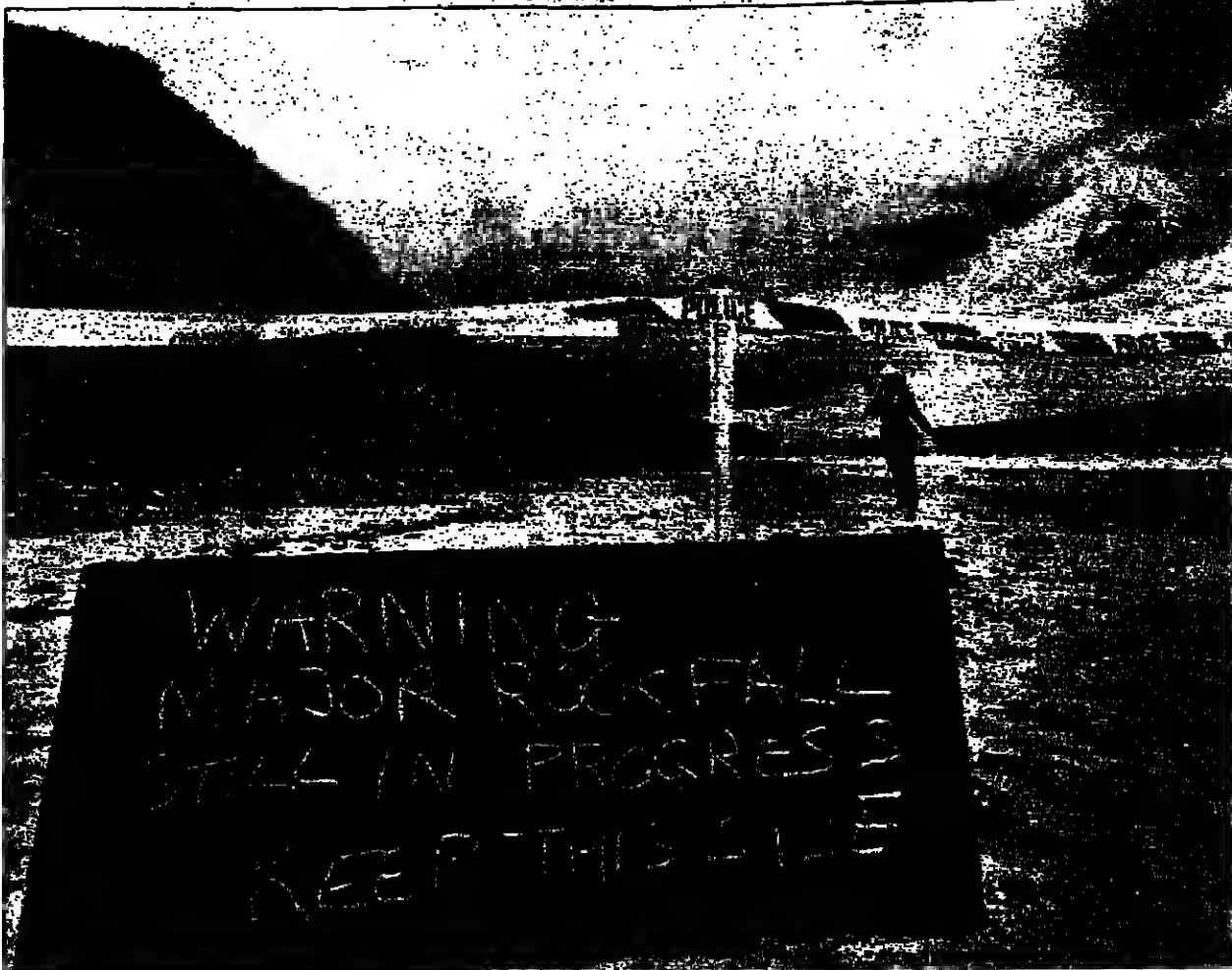
Stretching of the east and south coasts could be the next to collapse as torrential rains and high waves continue to pound Britain. Part of the Holderness Coast in Yorkshire, a strip east of Lyme Regis in Dorset, and a 200 metre stretch of cliffs on the Isle of Wight have been identified as most immediately vulnerable.

John Gummer, the Conservative MP for Suffolk Coastal and former Environment Secretary, has tabled a series of Commons questions to John Prescott, the Secretary for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, and Nick Brown, the Minister of Agriculture.

Mr Gummer is to ask Mr Brown if he will now reconsider the "savage" cut in the rate of financial support from the Government for coastal defences — down by 20 per cent in many cases. He said the Government had also made it more difficult for local authorities to get this support. Mr Gummer wants to know who is to be in overall charge of countering the threat to the coastline and is urging the minister to establish an integrated programme of action.

The threat to Britain's coastline — illustrated so dramatically when a large chunk of Beachy Head crashed down — is a product both of global warming, which is causing sea levels to rise, and the tilting effect that is a legacy of the last Ice Age.

Monitoring equipment has



Charmouth beach was closed and sightseers warned to stay away yesterday after the collapse of part of Beachy Head

picked up yawning cracks in the cliffs on the Isle of Wight, Freshwater Bay, and a £2 million scheme is to save the cliff road from collapse is ready to go into action.

Yesterday the Environment Agency warned sightseers to stay well away from Beachy Head, where a 50ft by 200ft section of the chalk cliff-face tumbled into the sea on Sunday night. A spokesman for the agency said: "The conditions are absolutely atrocious with high winds and lots of rain. We could get a large cliff fall at any time."

A geotechnics expert whose firm advises councils and Mr

Prescott's department on erosion said that the coast from North Yorkshire down through East Anglia, and south along to West Dorset and Devon was vulnerable.

Dr Alan Clark said: "It is impossible to say where the next collapse will occur. But you only need to look at the geology of the British coast to see where it is at risk." One of the areas most at risk, he said, was the Holderness Coast, running from Spurn Head to Bridlington, which is made of soft clay and over the past 1,000 years has lost about a mile.

At Freshwater Bay, near Afton Down, where the hazard-

ous cracks are being monitored, pile-driving will hold up the road when — rather than if — the Isle of Wight rock face collapses, Dr Clark said.

Global warming is forecast to bring an average rise in sea levels of 24 centimetres in the next 50 years because of thermal expansion of the oceans and melting glaciers, according to the Hadley Centre, part of the Meteorological Office at Bracknell. Britain is also tilting because of movements associated with the last Ice Age, with Scotland rising and the South of England falling.

Dr Clark, who works for High-Point Rendel in London,

said yesterday that the Hadley Centre estimated that, when the tilt effect was factored in, sea levels around northern Scotland would rise by 16 centimetres and those in southern England by 31 centimetres by the middle of the next century.

He said other features of global warming, including more violent storms, rainfall and waves, could hasten cliff collapse.

The rate of loss is currently a metre a year on the south coast, Martin Lee of Newcastle University said yesterday. On parts of the east coast, the rate is twice that, and in some places even more rapid. The

composition of the cliffs helps determine the rate of erosion. Mr Lee, a geomorphologist, said that the cliffs on the east coast were deposited by glaciers between 15,000 and 30,000 years ago. They were made up of clay and rocks, and far softer than the chalk cliffs of the south, which were formed during the Cretaceous period 30 million to 100-million years ago. Both kinds of coastline are being undermined by wave action.

The rubble formed by the collapse at Beachy Head will eventually be washed away, leaving the foot of the cliffs vulnerable to wave action.

Above this the chalk is riddled with fractures, fissures and cracks more than a metre wide. Some of these expand and become unstable due to effects such as rainwater seeping down through the chalk.

Martin Culshaw, an engineering geologist at the British Geological Survey in Keyworth, Nottinghamshire, said he believed the heavy winter rains, and the exceptional wetness of 1998, caused the sudden collapse. Freezing temperatures can be a factor, but in this case he believes temperatures have been too high.

The erosion on the east coast is more akin to a landslide than a collapse, with the cliffs slipping into the sea because of internal pressures rather than breaking off.

Again, waves erode the foot of the cliffs helping to aggravate huge pressures building up in the layers of clay pressing against each other.

Eventually the pressure, which is also "polishing" the surfaces of clay, reaches a critical point and one of the layers slides down into the sea. Mr Culshaw said the erosion can be accelerated by drought followed by heavy rains.

Concern over the cost of defending vulnerable shorelines prompted the Environment Agency to consider reducing sea defences.

Letters, page 19

Smoking closes 'mortality gap'

By IAN MURRAY, MEDICAL CORRESPONDENT

MEN are beginning to close the mortality gap with women, largely because they are more successful at giving up smoking.

The latest set of statistics were collected by the Faculty and Institute of Actuaries, which monitors death rates to help determine life insurance premiums. Its figures, based on the numbers of policy holders who died between 1991 and 1994, show that the average life expectancy for men since 1978 has increased by 14 per cent, while women's has increased by only 12 per cent.

When the actuaries made their last survey, from 1975 to 1978, the average male policy holder aged 30 could expect to live to be 76. Today he can expect to live three years and three months longer. The average 30-year-old woman in the first survey could expect to reach 83 and 11 months. Today she can look forward to living three years and five months longer.

Although this means that the actual mortality gap has widened slightly, the fact that

men's longevity is increasing at a faster rate than that of women, coupled with the fact that more men are giving up smoking, means that the difference is bound to start narrowing before long.

The mortality rate for women who smoked was twice as high as the rate for non-smokers while for men it was 1.7 times higher. This means that on average a 30-year-old woman smoker will die seven years sooner than a non-smoker while a 30-year-old male smoker will die 5.5 years sooner than a male non-smoker. Since 1990, when the actuaries last collected information on smoking, the proportion of men who smoked fell from 31 per cent to 25 per cent while the number of female smokers fell from 25 per cent to 21 per cent. The majority of men who smoked were older than 40 but the majority of women who smoked were under 40.

Figures from the Office of National Statistics suggest that the mortality gap between the sexes will narrow by 2½ months over the next 25 years.

'McLibel' case back in court

By FRANCES GIBB, LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

THE marathon libel battle brought by McDonald's against two environmentalists returned to court yesterday when the pair lodged an appeal against the ruling that they had libelled the company.

McDonald's launched the libel suit after Dave Morris, 44, and Helen Steel, 33, distributed pamphlets entitled *What's wrong with McDonald's? Everything they don't want you to know*. In 1997, Mr Justice Bell found in McDonald's favour on some points, but also upheld the pair's claim that the chain's advertising overstated its food's nutritional benefits, and that it had exploited children through its advertising, was responsible for animal cruelty and paid low wages.

The pair, now argue that these findings were so damning to the reputation of McDonald's that the corporation's claim for libel should have been thrown out.

The hearing, at the Court of Appeal, continues.

Minister drops plan to ban untreated milk

By MICHAEL HORNSEY, AGRICULTURE CORRESPONDENT

THE Government has abandoned plans to ban the sale of unpasteurised milk, despite concern that it could be contaminated with harmful bacteria.

Nick Brown, the Agriculture Minister, has told producers of untreated milk that he has "put a stop" to the ban, which was proposed in November 1997.

Mr Brown has decided that the risks from drinking "green top" milk, which accounts for no more than 1 per cent of total milk sales, do not justify removing the right of consumers to buy it. The Government is expected, however, to impose tougher conditions on raw milk production, including more frequent hygiene tests, paid for by producers.

Pasteurisation involves heating milk to a temperature required to kill potentially harmful pathogens, such as salmonella, campylobacter, *E. coli* and tuberculosis.

Enthusiasts say that pasteur-



Brown said people had right to buy 'green top'

isation reduces the flavour of untreated milk and leaves it less rich in vitamins and other health-giving properties.

Untreated milk has been banned for sale in Scotland since 1993. In England and Wales, farm shops and milkmen can still sell it with a warning on the label that it may contain organisms harmful to health.

Regular drinkers of unpasteurised milk include the Queen, the Duke of Edin-

burgh, and the Prince of Wales, who are supplied by their own herds of dairy cattle at Windsor and Highgrove.

Sir Julian Rose, the chairman of the Association of Unpasteurised Milk Producers and Consumers, said yesterday: "This is very good news."

"We have campaigned long and hard for the future of 'green top' and it has been clear from the outset that the grounds for a ban never stacked up."

The decision was deplored by the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health. Anne Goodwin, the institute's assistant secretary for food, said: "The Government is ignoring the warnings of its own scientific advisers. It does not make sense to take risks with dangerous new pathogens such as *E. coli* O157."

The ban was proposed on the recommendation of the Advisory Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food after surveys of raw cows' milk found food poisoning pathogens and "substantial" evidence of faecal contamination.

Tipsters back Hughes for double

By DALYA ALBERGE, ARTS CORRESPONDENT

THE late Poet Laureate, Ted Hughes, yesterday received another posthumous prize, the Whitbread Poetry Award, a day after he won the T.S. Eliot Poetry Prize and a year after winning the overall Whitbread Book of the Year.

His poignant collection, *Birthday Letters*, goes on to form part of the shortlist for this year's £21,000 Whitbread Book of the Year, to be announced later this month. He won last year with *Tales from Ovid*.

In the Whitbread's 28th year, Hughes faces competi-

tion from Justin Cartwright, who yesterday won the Nobel Award; Amanda Foreman, who was singled out for the Biography Award for her first book, on Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire; and Giles Foden, deputy literary editor of *The Guardian*, who took the First Novel Award.

Hughes's powerful verse about his tragic relationship with Sylvia Plath is the favourite both with the bookmakers William Hill and many in the literary world. The Whitbread judges, who included the poet U.A. Fanthorpe, said: "In this

very personal collection Hughes avoids every pitfall of remorse, self-pity, self-justification — that the subject, his wife's suicide, could have led him into. His account of that relationship seems hewn from granite."

Hughes's daughter, Frieda, a painter and poet, said: "I am so happy that there are people who think he's as extraordinary as I do." Among previous Whitbread winners are Kazuo Ishiguro's *An Artist of the Floating World* in 1986, John Richardson's *A Life of Picasso* in 1991

and Seamus Heaney's *The Spirit Level* in 1996. Cartwright has won this year's novel category for *Leaving the Cheers*, the story of a recently unemployed man who returns to small-town America for his high-school reunion and rediscovers a past life, vastly different from his own successful cosmopolitan existence in London.

The Children's Book of the Year will be announced on January 26, with the overall winner from the other categories. BBC2 will broadcast the ceremony that night.

Duke stays with Navy for liaison job

By ALAN HAMILTON

THE Duke of York is to remain in the Navy, and will be promoted to a new post in international relations, the Ministry of Defence announced yesterday.

Last year the Duke, 38, indicated that he might leave the Navy after nearly 20 years' service, but he has been persuaded to accept promotion to the rank of commander and to take on a challenging role liaising with other navies.

Currently a lieutenant-commander working in the Directorate of Naval Operations in Whitehall, the Duke will remain at MoD headquarters when he

takes up his new post in April with the diplomacy section of the Naval Staff Directorate. It will entail a £9,000 pay rise to £45,000. The Duke is understood to have been persuaded to stay by the challenge of the new job and the lack of a regular family life to return to. His royal duties remain relatively light.

His new post will involve the planning and administration of bilateral naval staff talks, as well as other liaison duties in Britain and overseas.

An MoD spokesman said last night: "The Duke will make full use of the exten-

sive experience he has gained with MoD and elsewhere. He has a unique blend of skills: clearly his royal background will help, plus he has a fundamental understanding of the working of MoD."

Buckingham Palace said last night that the Queen had been consulted on the appointment and that she and the Duke of Edinburgh were "very pleased."

The Duke joined the Navy commission in 1979, and saw active service as a helicopter pilot during the Falklands conflict. He is currently responsible for the effectiveness of frigate and destroyer aviation.

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By SIMON DE BRUXELLES

Phil Naish has turned his fascination into an art form. Every evening he dons clothes similar to those worn by Rameses the Great, then reclines in one of his two replica thrones.

The house in Roath, Cardiff, has become a shrine to the rulers of Ancient Egypt. Mr Naish, a 40-year-old artist, is fortunate that his wife Suzanne shares his interest. Their home is packed with replicas of Egyptian statues, paintings and jewellery. His most prized object is a scarab 4000 years old, used by the builders of the pyramids to mark the end of a day's work. He said: "I have become quite well known locally for my interest. In fact, I've been given the nickname 'Rameses'."



Each night Phil Naish dresses as a pharaoh and tries to reflect the life of Ancient Egypt in his Cardiff home.

Yesterday was the opening day of the most expensive legal case in British sporting history, estimated to be costing up to £25 million. Charles Aldous, QC, for the League, told the Restrictive Practices Court that the "life blood" of English soccer — the fans — would drain away if the Office of Fair Trade

At the moment only 60 Premiership matches are shown live by BSkyB, with highlights in the BBC's *Match of the Day*. The two channels deal with the Premier League lasts for four years. If the OFT wins

News International, the subsidiary of The News Corporation that owns The Times, owns 40 per cent of BSkyB. The case continues.

A safe carried away by thieves contained only 350 teabags. The safe was taken from Trent Buses in Hucknall, Nottinghamshire. A spokesman said: "We never keep money on the premises and the only bonds in the safe were Brooke Bond."

**BY TIM JONES
AND RAY KENNEDY**

Five Britons were injured in Cape Town last August when a bomb exploded at the Planet Hollywood restaurant. The Foreign Office warns people visiting South Africa to be on guard against carjacking and armed robbery, to avoid driving in rural areas at night, and to stay away from townships.

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secretary of the Nolan committee, worried that an ethics adviser would undermine democratic accountability. However, such a commissioner would quickly be able to deal with charges about conflicts of interest, and thus dampen the current feverish mood in which the press and the Opposition chase and claim and demand resignations.

That encourages cynicism about politics and discourages business men and others with outside interests from becoming involved in politics. An ethics adviser might help to clear the air.

BY VALERIE ELLIOTT, WHITEHALL EDITOR

Sir David yesterday: he said he found nothing offensive in the term "company wife."

the Head of the Diplomatic Service, later told MPs it was "a disgraceful incident" in which a triple apology was in order. But he did not believe "one mistake" should blight Sir David's distinguished career. Sir John described his colleague as "a cavalier, I am something of a roundhead." But he added: "I do not want service of automatons."

BY ROLAND WATSON, POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

der pressure in the Commons today as William Hague has his first chance to raise Mr. Mandelson's departure as Prime Minister's Questions and a Liberal Democrat motion will accuse ministers of allowing personal rivalries to mar the presentation of policy.

BY JAMES LANDALE,
POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT



ym are thought to be possible.
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Others could be Lord Nolan, the former law lord, a suitable bishop, a judge and a representative of ordinary people.

The Government's plans to reform the House of Lords will begin next week when a short Bill scrapping the right of hereditary peers to sit and vote is introduced into the Commons.

Cranborne, the former Tory leader in the Lords, survives — under which the Tories would accept the Bill in return for saving some 91 hereditary peers

Next week's White Paper will also set out the terms and conditions of a royal commis-

Its chairman will be announced next week and it should start work next month.

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Princess's fund gives £1m to mine charities

THE Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund yesterday handed over more than £1 million to 13 landmine charities. All of the grants have gone to victims' organisations, and none to mine clearance groups.

The Princess of Wales was involved in all aspects of the anti-landmine cause during the last year of her life and some clearance charities have criticised the fund for concentrating solely on victims. Andrew Purkis, the fund's chief executive, defended the trustees' decision.

"This is a beginning, it is not the end. We are committed to working with and for the survivors of landmines long-term and sticking at it year in and year out," he said.

"We are strongly in favour of the principle of landmine clearance, but what we have to keep asking ourselves is how we can best make a difference with our money. I certainly would not exclude involvement in mine clearance in the future."

One of the charities that did get a grant was Tim's Fund, set up in memory of 23-year-old Timothy Goggs, who died while clearing landmines in Afghanistan in 1992. His par-

Trustees are criticised for refusing to help mine clearance groups, reports

Michael Harvey

ents, Henrietta and Quentin, of Devizes, Wiltshire, said that the £70,000 grant was particularly appropriate. "Tim's Fund is a memorial project, the Diana Fund is a memorial project and the work of both those people is now going forward together," Mrs Goggs said.

Tim Goggs was posthumously awarded the George Medal for his bravery in trying to rescue his colleagues in the mine explosion that killed him. He left a legacy to Christian Aid for a programme to teach people how to recognise mines and to mark minefields for later destruction. His parents have continued to raise money for the cause.

Tim Goggs had volunteered to go to Afghanistan, while waiting to take up a commission at Sandhurst after com-

pleting a degree at Newcastle University. He loved the work so much that he stayed for 18 months until his death. He was in charge of a Halo Trust team clearing mines near Kabul, using a Russian tank to push two eight-tonne mine rollers.

The tank ran into a booby-trap designed to stop such a clearance, and three mines exploded directly underneath it, igniting the fuel tank. Tim got out but went back for a friend, Julian Grogson. In doing so, he fatally damaged his lungs. He was flown to Britain but died nearly two weeks later.

Mr Goggs said: "Tim loved what he did and we have travelled to Afghanistan to see the wheat fields growing where he cleared the mines. We wrote to Princess Diana to tell her about the project should she want to go to Afghanistan. Her staff rang back to say she was very interested but it was not to be. She would have approved of this grant."

The trustees of the Princess's fund courted controversy by declining to fund the British Red Cross's work for landmine victims. The Red Cross was pivotal in encouraging the Princess in her crusade against mines and took her on her high-profile trip to Angola in January 1997. Dr Purkis said that the Red Cross grant application did not meet the necessary criteria, but that the fund looked forward to working with the organisation in the near future.



Quentin and Henrietta Goggs, whose son, Tim, was killed while clearing mines in Afghanistan. Tim's memorial charity was awarded £70,000

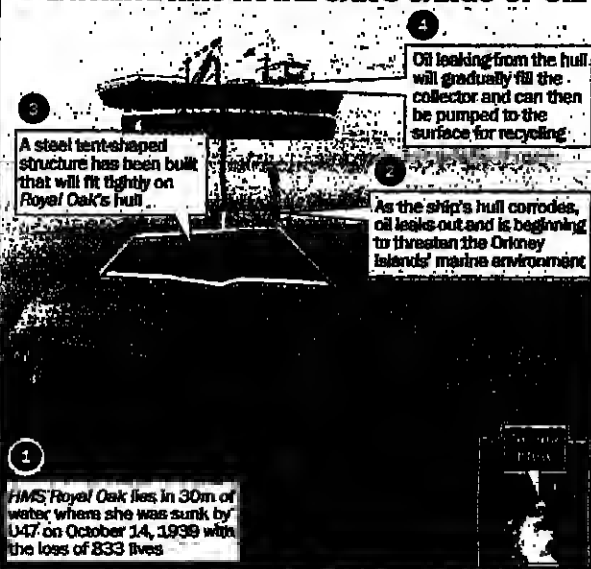
Of the 13 grants, ranging from £11,000 to £125,000, only one was to a charity directly associated with the Princess. The Landmine Survivors Network, which hosted the Princess's trip to Bosnia in August 1997, receives £113,000 in partnership with the Leonard Cheshire In-

ternational charity to continue its work in Bosnia with the disabled victims of landmines. The other grants were: £125,000 for Action on Disability and Development; £120,000 for Concern Worldwide; £123,000 for the Jaipur Limb

Campaign; £39,600 for Motivation; £20,000 for Disability Awareness in Action/Pan African Federation of Disabled People; £120,000 for POWER; £12,000 for Voluntary Service Overseas; £32,000 for War on Want; £90,625 for World Vi-

sion; and £110,000 for the Save the Children Fund. A grant of £60,000 was made to the UK Working Group on Landmines, the umbrella organisation that campaigns for the banning of landmines.

SALVAGING HMS ROYAL OAK'S CARGO OF OIL



Navy to remove oil from sunken war grave

Gillian Harris on a clean-up that will leave the wreck of HMS Royal Oak intact and reduce the threat to wildlife in Scapa Flow

FOR 60 years HMS Royal Oak has lain undisturbed, a grave for the 833 men who died when the battleship was torpedoed by a U-boat.

The fight to preserve the dignity of the wreck, in Scapa Flow off Orkney, has grown fiercer in recent years as the thousands of tonnes of oil seeping from the corroding hull threaten environmental disaster.

Today the Royal Navy will conduct a unique operation that it hopes will remove the oil without needing to cut open the war grave.

Divers will attach a £20,000 steel "umbrella" to the upturned hull to trap the oil before bringing it to the surface, where it will be removed, each month. It is estimated that the wreck will be empty by 2014. Conservationists, anxious to pro-

tect Scapa Flow's large seal population and several species of rare birds, would prefer a quicker solution.

"It's a time bomb," Eric Meek, an officer with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, said. "The ship is lying less than half a mile offshore and at this time of year Scapa Flow is an area of major importance for Arctic wintering birds."

"Thick furnace oil is leaking through thousands upon thousands of corroded rivets, and adding another 15 years to the 60 years it has already lain there is crazy. The extrac-

tion has to be speeded up before we have a disaster on our hands."

Staff from the Royal Navy's Environmental Unit in Bath, who devised the scheme, want to disturb the wreck as little as possible. Slicing into the hull to siphon off what remains of 3,500 tonnes of fuel has been rejected as unsuitable.

The crew of the Royal Oak, which sank in October 1939, are not forgotten in Orkney. Each year the islanders hold a service of remembrance in which Navy divers hoist the White Ensign on the ship's stern.

Roger Tolliver, the project's direc-

tor, spent two years on the plan. He retrieved the ship's plans from the Maritime Museum at Greenwich to create a three-dimensional computer model. Divers then established that oil was escaping through holes created by shrapnel rivets.

The divers found that it was the natural action of the tide and winds that was pushing the oil to the surface. Mr Tolliver realised that if a structure could be put in place above the hull, the oil would float into it.

"The hull is surprisingly strong and our intention is to secure the steel canopy, check that the rate of

leakage has been accurately estimated and that the device can adequately contain it, and then accelerate the flow," he said. Before taps can be attached to the rivets to guide the oil out more quickly, the canopy has to be tested.

Allan Thomson, managing director of Briggs Marine, a Fife-based construction company, believes that the canopy built from the Royal Navy's designs is safe. "We have spent the past three months amending the original concept," he said. "One side of the canopy has been made longer than the other to compensate for the way she is listing."

Bob Moore, director of Orkney Islands Council Harbours, said: "It's a compromise, but hopefully a speedier solution can be arrived at in time."

Royal anchors on sale

TWO spare anchors from the former Royal Yacht Britannia have been put up for sale, and are expected to fetch up to £10,000 each.

The anchors, which are about six feet tall and weigh about three tonnes, have been put out to tender after being found in a Ministry of Defence

store. While they are similar to military anchors, a small design difference means they cannot be used on warships.

Although tenders are sought for their sale, the ministry may also consider giving them to a museum or another interested party if it was felt to be appropriate.

£97,000 puts fearsome tank back on track

BY SIMON DE BRUNELLES

FOR most of the Second World War the Allies had nothing that could touch it. The German Tiger tank was twice the weight of its adversaries, its armour was twice as thick and its enormous gun made their weapons look like pea-shooters.

Now the most complete Tiger tank is to be restored to working order thanks to a £97,000 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Since the end of the war the 56-tonne Tiger, captured in North Africa in 1943, has been the most popular attraction at the Tank Museum in Bovington, Dorset. When the year-long restoration is complete it will be the only working Tiger tank in the world, and fit to be reintroduced to one of the last people to see it in action.

In 1943 Peter Gugin was a young lieutenant in 48 Battalion Royal Tank Regiment, commanding three tanks in Tunisia. Mr Gugin, 78, of Leamington Spa, said: "We arrived in Africa with every confidence in our Churchill tanks but the Tiger was a shock."

The "Sovington Tiger" was captured at Medjer el Bab on April 21, during the advance on Tunis. "The Germans were on high ground and we advanced in the afternoon up the hill from a valley filled with wheat fields," Mr Gugin said. "We not had gone very far when two of our tanks were

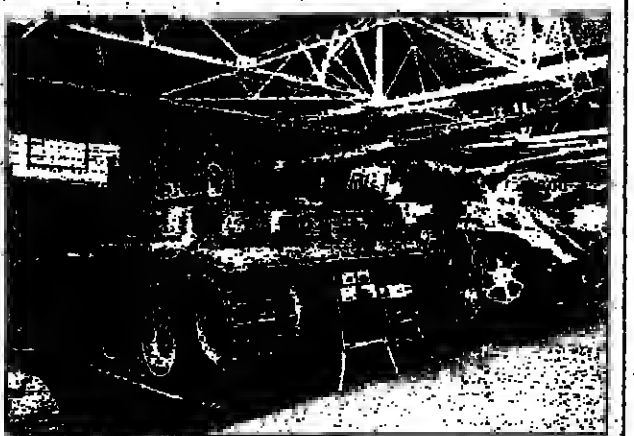
taken out by two beautifully aimed shots. The first shot passed straight through my tank from the front to the back and set the engine in the rear on fire. Luckily it did not hit any of us and we baled out."

"Seconds later the commander and radio operator of a Churchill near us were blown out of the turret and killed with the entire crew. The rest of our tanks started firing and somehow one of the shots hit the Tiger, which was dug in."

When the hull was taken the fluke nature of the disabling shot was revealed. The two-inch round, which could not have penetrated the armour, had hit the end of the Tiger's 88mm gun, glanced off along the barrel into the turret ring and jammed the turret. Unable to traverse the gun and with the commander slightly wounded, the crew had fled.

Restoration of the Tiger is intended as a memorial to Allied tank crews who had to face the formidable foe. Kate White, project leader, said: "The Tiger attracts worldwide interest because it was one of the most impressive armoured vehicles of the Second World War."

"It will be on static display in the winter but in the summer it will be operated outdoors, where its unique power and character will be on show. More than 1,300 Tigers were built but no more than 12 are believed to have survived."



The Tiger tank at Bovington will be the only working model

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Fischer: tax issue is a British problem

Germany returns to attack on EU taxes

BY CHARLES BREMNER

AFTER a Christmas truce, Germany yesterday launched a fresh attack over the national right to veto European Union tax matters.

Calling for rapid steps to closer political union, Joschka Fischer, the Foreign Minister, predicted that the EU would be ready for its next round of changes to its basic treaty in 2001. Germany believes that by then only treaty changes should be subject to veto, he said. "The key question here is the Union's readiness to accept majority decisions in as many areas as possible," he added.

Tony Blair has rejected any move to majority voting on taxes, along with German calls for closer "harmony" in fiscal policy, a theme which is being pushed hard by Bonn in its current turn in the EU presidency. France has also backed the idea of majority voting on taxes.

Herr Fischer said he was not trying to create difficulties for Britain just as Mr Blair was bringing it closer to the EU mainstream. But, he added, "the problem is a British one, not a European one". Mr Blair proclaimed the tax argument closed at the Vienna EU summit last month after he won assurances from the Germans that nobody was seeking "uniform" tax rates across the Union.

Presenting Germany's EU programme to the European Parliament in Strasbourg, Herr Fischer also reinforced Bonn's demands for a review of Britain's special rebate from the EU budget.

Commission fights to avert censure vote

Showdown will decide fate of two members, writes Charles Bremner

THE European Commission was under pressure last night to sacrifice two of its members — Edith Cresson of France and Manuel Marín of Spain — as the price for averting a crippling censure vote by the European Parliament over sleaze and bad management.

The stakes were raised in the Commission's showdown with the Parliament when the European People's Party (EPP), the centre-right group that is its second biggest bloc, threw its weight behind a Liberal-Green motion demanding the resignation of the two commissioners deemed most responsible for malpractice.

With resistance from the dominant Socialist group shaky, the chances are high that a majority of the 626-member assembly could disown the pair in votes tomorrow that risk paralysing the whole EU machine.

The Commission was locked in discussion last night on strategy for cooling the Parliament's ire. Franz Fischer, the Austrian in charge of agriculture, said members were standing behind Mme Cresson and Señor Marín. No Commission member has ever been forced out of office.

Mme Cresson, 65, a controversial former French Prime Minister who is in charge of research and education, is blamed for the mismanagement of millions of pounds in

a vocational training programme, as well as for giving Commission contracts to friends. Señor Marín, 49, a long-serving Commissioner in charge of overseas aid, is held responsible for the mismanagement of tens of millions of pounds in various programmes as well as cronism. Both have rejected all charges.

The Parliament has no power to dismiss individual commissioners and Jacques Santer, the Commission President, was also supporting his colleagues after attempting to defuse parliamentary anger on Monday with new and sleaze rules.

However a negative vote would inflict crushing discredit on the Santer team. Continued Commission defiance is certain to boost the vote in favour of all-out censure of the executive. A two-thirds majority would automatically sack the whole Commission.

Party political manoeuvring was adding to the confusion in Strasbourg yesterday as

group leaders struggled to lay down clear lines for their members. Pauline Green, the British Labour MEP who leads the Socialist bloc, was struggling to stop a sizeable band of German and other rebels backing censure while also resisting the move against the individual commissioners. "Picking off commissioners is unacceptable to us. If you are going to pick one or two then you are going to have to pick them all. You must sack the lot."

But Mrs Green, under pressure to save the day from Germany and the other left-wing governments, backed away from a promise to support all-out censure if individual commissioners were penalised. Clearly alarmed at the prospect of political disaster, she urged Mr Santer to ensure a favourable vote by fleshing out his reform plans.

Arguing that Commission abuses did not merit full-scale sacking, she charged fellow MEPs with hypocrisy over their failure to clean up sleaze abuses in their own assembly.

By focusing fire on two out of the 20 commissioners, leaders of the Liberals and other smaller groups are making clear their price for saving the skin of the full Commission tomorrow. "A motion of censure is too blunt a measure. What we need is a selective cull," said Edward McMillan-Scott, leader of the British Tories, who are part of the EPP. Only the Greens and smaller groups fully back censure the whole Commission.

Anger against Mme Cresson, a hot-tempered Socialist who was close to the late President Mitterrand, intensified after an appearance before the Parliament in which she ridiculed the allegations and snapped at MEPs for failing to listen to her. Señor Marín scored somewhat better with an emotional approach in which he proclaimed his personal honesty while acknowledging that mistakes had been made in his administration.

Leading article, page 19



Edith Cresson and Manuel Marín, who face being unseated over alleged fraud and mismanagement



The widow of Jan Ducky is comforted after Slovakia's former Economy Minister was assassinated outside his flat in Bratislava by an unidentified gunman

Slovak ex-minister killed

Bratislava. Jan Ducky, the former Slovak Economy Minister, was assassinated here in front of the apartment block where he lived by a gunman who pumped several bullets into his head, police reported yesterday.

Mr Ducky, 55, served in the Government of Vladimir Meciar, the authoritarian former Prime Minister, from December 1994 to August 1996. He was a close associate of Mr Meciar, who was ousted in elections last September. Witnesses said Mr Ducky was shot on Monday by a man in his thirties, a spokes-

man said. Slovak press reports recently indicated that he was involved in a number of suspicious business deals.

The ex-minister was appointed head of Slovakia's gas utility in April 1997, a post he held until last November. He was also a senior member of the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia, Mr Meciar's former governing party, the biggest in parliament.

Mr Meciar's Government has been replaced by a five-party coalition amid widespread opposition to his authoritarian style and accusations that it used underhand

means to achieve its political ends. Mafia-style violence has also marred Slovakia's reputation.

Mikulas Dzurinda, the new Slovak Prime Minister, has vowed to clean up the country's image and prepare it for membership of the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

Despite Slovakia's relative economic success it was the only country in the ex-communist bloc to be rejected for EU membership talks on political grounds, in the European Commission's opinions on candidate states in 1997. (AP)

Yeltsin's nuclear officers resign

FROM ANNA BLINDY IN MOSCOW

THE resignations of four senior members of Russia's armed forces have jeopardised the country's nuclear security and left President Yeltsin in sole charge of the "nuclear suitcase". *Komsomolskaya Pravda* reported yesterday.

Lieutenant-General Anatoli Sokolov, commander of the Missile Attack Prevention Division, said he felt his work for the army to be "senseless". Three of his deputies also resigned in protest at being brought under the control of the Strategic Missile Troops.

Until now General Sokolov and his colleagues have been regarded as the President's key advisers on the workings of the "nuclear suitcase". Their resignations follow military reforms designed to cut costs and improve efficiency.

The newspaper expressed outrage at the loss of the four senior officers and described with derision the results of General Sokolov's request for a further investigation into the merging of the two units. Apparently, the investigation took the form of reprimands for Russia's foremost electronics experts for wearing shoe laces that were too long.

However, Aleksandr Golitsyn, military expert for *Izvestia* magazine, said the resignations were more the result of internal infighting than a matter of military principle and said nuclear security had not been put at risk. "These men are no longer as important as they used to be and it came as quite a shock to them to be stripped of their status," he said.

Russia's nuclear capability remains a threat both to itself and to the rest of the world. A report last year by Germany's Peace and Conflict Research Foundation said that serious problems with early-warning systems in Russia meant that nuclear weapons were often kept in a permanent state of alert and that they could be launched within minutes of a real or imagined attack.

Washington: The United States imposed economic sanctions against a Moscow university and two other Russian institutions, accusing them of leaking nuclear and missile technology to Iran. (AP)

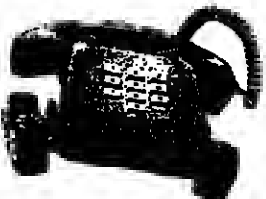
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APRs based on standard variable rate repayment mortgages. All rates correct at 4th January 1999. MIRAS has been calculated under current tax legislation which may also vary. Source: Moneyfacts. Calculations based on an £80,000 repayment mortgage repayable over 25 years (300 monthly repayments) with rates (as quoted) assumed constant.

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'Danger' plant faces inquiry

FROM BEN MACINTYRE IN PARIS

THE government-owned nuclear fuel company in France is under investigation on suspicion of endangering public health by violating safety regulations at its nuclear waste reprocessing plant in La Hague by the Channel.

Acting on a complaint filed by an anti-nuclear group in 1994, Frédéric Chevallier, an investigating magistrate in Cherbourg, announced an inquiry into the company, Cogema, on suspicion of "putting the life of another in danger by exposing them to the immediate risk of death or injury of a sort leading to mutilation or permanent infirmity, by deliberately violating security obligations as defined by the law".

Cogema said that it was astonished by the action. "Cogema formally disputes the charge that it has abandoned, dumped or arranged to have dumped, waste materials in violation of the law," the company said in a statement.

In 1997, French scientists said they had identified a higher incidence of leukaemia among people living near the plant, and in November Greenpeace claimed airborne radioactivity had been detected at levels thousands of times above normal. Cogema said the gas, Krypton-85, was not highly toxic.

'King Knut' strikes deal over Kosovo hostages

FROM TOM WALKER IN BRAGAS, KOSOVO

KNUT VOLLEBAEK, the new chairman of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, yesterday said the Kosovo hostage crisis was over, and that eight Yugoslav army conscripts, held by the ethnic Albanian guerrillas since last Friday, would be released soon.

The Norwegian, on his first visit to Kosovo, could not give details of how a deal had been struck with the Kosovo Liberation Army, or say if any concessions had been made. The KLA had been demanding that at least nine of its fighters held by the Serbs be swapped with the conscripts.

"We are demanding that they all be released and that there are no conditions" was all that Mr Vollebaek would say. KLA sources said they believed a secret deal had been made, in which the Serbs would release some prisoners later.

During a busy day, Mr Vollebaek — dubbed "King Knut" by the press corps for his instant success — viewed at first hand how his 700 unarmed monitors in the province have metamorphosed into peacekeepers. In a convoy of distinctive orange Jeeps, the OSCE chairman drove to Podujevo, around which the Yugoslav Army has massed two armoured infantry companies, their tank barrels point-

ing in the direction of the hills where the KLA has been holding the conscripts.

Mr Vollebaek, who is the Norwegian Foreign Minister, suffered the indignity of his armoured vehicle sinking axle-deep into mud just short of the army's forward positions. He was rescued by a British monitor in a Land Rover. The British monitors, who have played a crucial role in the hostage negotiations, have admitted that they have become the backbone of the OSCE operation.

"It all stems from our Northern Ireland experience," one former army officer said yesterday. "This whole thing would fall apart pretty quickly without us."

He said that last night was



Vollebaek demanding release of conscripts

his fifth spent beneath the stars; he slept on a flat patch of gravel behind his Land Rover, he said, keeping a wary eye round the clock, on the Yugoslav Army.

The Kosovo mission's Chief of Staff, Major-General John Drewienkiewicz, a former British Army head of engineering, confirmed that the monitors had been venturing well beyond their original brief of counting troop and guerrilla numbers and equipment.

Over the weekend, when the Yugoslav Army seemed tempted to storm the village of Bajgora, where the army conscripts are being held near the regional KLA headquarters, General Drewienkiewicz said it had been down to the monitors, mostly British and American, to prevent a bloodbath.

"We had to persuade them to step back," he said. "My people walked the tanks back." In Bragas, a village two miles from Podujevo, the Albanians held a funeral for a local politician assassinated in Pristina on Monday night. His death was blamed, by speakers at the ceremony, on Serbian secret agents.

As he was buried, a volley of fire from a Yugoslav army tank sent dozens of crows into the sky. For Mr Vollebaek, despite his success on hostages, it was a powerful reminder of how fragile the ceasefire is.

First gas station ready for 'green' cars

FROM ROGER BOYES IN BONN

GERMANY turned a little greener yesterday with the opening of Europe's first liquid hydrogen filling station. Hydrogen — three times as powerful as petrol — is being touted as the clean fuel of the 21st century and the race is on to make the first mass-produced hydrogen vehicle.

Since the Green Party entered government — as junior partner to the Social Democrats — industry has pushed hard to develop alternative energy sources.

The filling station, in Hamburg, was symbolic rather than immediately useful. Direct hydrogen injection has proved a complicated way to fuel cars. Prototypes use special fuel cells harnessing 70 per cent of the energy created from the combustion of hydrogen. This compared

favourably with petrol combustion but hydrogen has to be cooled to minus 253C (minus 423F) to become a liquid. Direct hydrogen is, at the moment, impractical and uneconomical, but DaimlerChrysler has constructed a prototype using a liquid methanol that is then converted into hydrogen gas. It said vehicles using hydrogen could be on offer by 2004.

Some Green activists are sceptical about the fuel. Although it produces no environmentally damaging waste — only water — the manufacture of hydrogen requires huge energy expenditure. That might make ecological sense for airships — another hydrogen project — but not for mass car production. Even so, the idea has caught the spirit of the times.

Yesterday the German renewable energy company WRE said it would begin selling "green" electricity in England and Wales in April. The electricity regulator, Ofgem, has given WRE the go-ahead to supply households using the grid system from a consortium of companies that harness solar, wind, and bio-power.

"Our prices will be about 10 per cent above others but will not be unrealistic — rather they will be in the top third of competitors," said Martin Jakubowski, a WRE director. "In the long term WRE will be able to reduce its electricity price through economies as well as big and efficient plants." The company also plans windparks off the Cornish coast and in the North Sea, near Germany's coast.

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Clinton critic accused by porn tycoon

ONE of President Clinton's fiercest critics has become the latest victim of Larry Flynt, the pornographer, who claimed he was a hypocrite for having an alleged affair and helping his wife to have an abortion.

Bob Barr, a congressman from Georgia, who had called for Mr Clinton to be impeached before anyone had even heard of Monica Lewinsky and is one of the Republican "managers" presenting the case against the President in the Senate, is a stern anti-abortionist and proponent of family values.

In the latest demonstration of the depths to which political life in Washington has sunk, a striking Mr Flynt produced an affidavit from Mr Barr's former wife, claiming that he had paid for her to have an abortion and had been unfaithful to her.

Gail Barr, who was Mr Barr's second wife, said she was convinced that her husband had an affair with the woman who became his third wife while they were still living together.

Mr Flynt produced transcripts of their divorce proceedings in which Mr Barr invoked a Georgia statute similar to the Fifth Amendment to avoid answering when asked if he had committed adultery. The publisher said he was, therefore, a hypocrite for lambasting Mr Clinton's evasiveness when he was questioned about his relationship with Ms Lewinsky.

Mrs Barr also said that her former husband did not oppose her decision to have an abortion, paid for the operation and drove her to and from the clinic. In public, Mr Barr likens abortion to murder and has said that he would do everything possible to stop his present wife terminating a pregnancy, even if she had been raped.

"To me that represents the ultimate form of hypocrisy and, in many ways, it is worse than not telling the truth under oath," Mr Flynt said.

In a statement yesterday,

**'Hypocrite' taunt
hurled at House
Republican,
writes Damian
Whitworth**

Mr Barr declined to discuss his personal life, but said: "I have never suggested, urged, forced or encouraged anyone to have an abortion."

Mr Flynt, who publishes *Hustler* and a string of other pornographic magazines, offered a reward of \$1 million (\$615,000) for information about the infidelities of members of Congress. He says he is preparing to divulge new sleazy details as the trial of Mr Clinton in the Senate goes on. Last year Bob Livingston, the incoming Speaker of the House, resigned as Mr Flynt's investigators were gathering information on his extramarital affairs.

The pornographer, who treated his right to print hardcore pornography as a First Amendment crusade and was immortalised for doing so in the film *The People Versus Larry Flynt*, denied that he had any co-operation in his mock-raking from the White House.

But Jim Nicholson, chairman of the Republican National Congress, demanded that President Clinton call off his "attack dogs" and "end the tactics of sexual terrorism and put your buddy, Larry Flynt, back in the plain brown paper wrapper where he belongs."

Mr Barr and the 12 other members of the House Judiciary Committee were busy yesterday writing the opening prosecution arguments which will begin when the trial starts in earnest tomorrow.

The House has 24 hours to make its case and the White House has an equal time to respond. Only then will the issue of whether or not to call

witnesses, including Ms Lewinsky, be debated.

Mr Clinton is accused of committing perjury by giving a false account of his relationship with Ms Lewinsky to the Grand Jury last summer and obstructing justice in his attempts to cover it up.

Joe Lockhart, the White House spokesman, yesterday attacked the 105-page legal brief submitted by the House prosecutors in which they outlined how they would show that seemingly innocent events "may well take on a sinister, or even criminal, connotation when observed in the context of the whole plot". Mr Lockhart said: "The hallmark of a weak case is hyperbole and overblown rhetoric. It reads like a cheap mystery."

A new poll yesterday by *USA Today* and CNN showed that 79 per cent of Americans thought Mr Clinton had committed perjury and 53 per cent believed he had obstructed justice. But majorities in both cases thought the crimes did not warrant his removal from office. His job approval rating remained high, at 67 per cent.

Bronwen Maddox, page 15



Sylvester Stallone's bayfront mansion in Miami which has been the subject of a \$27.5 million offer by lawyers acting on behalf of a dog named Gunther

Millionaires' Miami going to the dogs

FROM DAVID ADAMS
IN MIAMI



Dog's life: Gunther IV

AGENTS for the actor Sylvester Stallone, who owns a luxurious waterfront villa in one of Miami's plushiest neighbourhoods, are considering a bizarre offer from the handlers of a German shepherd dog which inherited \$65 million (£40 million) from a German countess.

The dog — Gunther IV — inherited the money through its father, Gunther III, which performed with a popular German disco dance troupe, the Gunther Group. His bark was so endearing that Countess Karla Liebenstein left him her fortune in 1992.

Gunther III also died, and the fortune — now estimated at \$200 million — passed to Gunther IV. The money is in the safekeeping of the Gunther Corp, an offshore holding company in the Bahamas and is administered by lawyers entrusted with looking after Gunther IV's every need — including suitable accommodation and a bodyguard — as well as promoting music, sports and scientific research.

"Our clients were very impressed by the elegance of the home, and are therefore evaluating the prospect of becoming active purchasers," they wrote in a letter to Wimbley-Riley Realty, the Miami estate agent handling the sale of Mr Stallone's 11-acre property

in the Coconut Grove district. When he bought it in 1994 the \$8 million price tag was the highest ever paid for a southern Florida home.

Mr Stallone recently decided to sell the home after complaining that his privacy was being interrupted by tourists. The asking price is \$27.5 million (£17 million). Mr Stallone is reportedly moving closer to Hollywood — with his wife and their Labrador, Flipper — where he has bought a \$10 million home in Beverly Hills.

But Gunther IV is facing competition for the house. A group of investors has already offered Mr Stallone \$24.7 million, and plans to build a luxury hotel on the site. However, local homeowners do not like the idea of their quiet streets becoming a commercial thoroughfare, and the hotel project may not be approved.

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WORLD IN BRIEF

Beijing crackdown irks Washington

Washington: America told China yesterday that it was "very disturbed" at the recent crackdown on Chinese dissidents and said the Asian nation would benefit if its people could take part freely in public life. The crackdown, aimed at advocates of a multiparty system, could spoil a visit to Washington in April by Zhu Rongji, the Chinese Prime Minister, an American official added.

The meeting in Washington was part of the first human rights talks between the two countries for four years. Madeleine Albright, the US Secretary of State, said: "We believe that it is very important for a country such as China, which has great responsibilities and is a hugely important country, to be able to benefit by the free participation of all its people." (Reuters)

Green film protest fails

Bangkok: A judge has refused to issue an injunction to stop the production of a Leonardo DiCaprio film in a national park conservation area on a southern Thai island. Environmentalists, residents and hotel and tour operators have opposed plans by Twentieth Century Fox to film *The Beach* on the Phi Phi Islands in Krabi province. The film crew has removed natural vegetation from Maya Beach in the islands and planted 93 coconut trees, which the protesters say will permanently damage the ecosystem. (AFP)

Spirit of Stalin returns

Moscow: A grandson of Stalin has launched a movement aimed at restoring President Yeltsin. Colonel Yevgeny Dzhugashvili yesterday joined a group of leftists to found a new political bloc whose aims are the restoration of the Soviet Union and the removal of the post of President of Russia. Dzhugashvili was the name of Stalin before he succumbed to the Bolshevik fashion for pseudonyms. Colonel Dzhugashvili used one of his grandfather's phrases to call Mr Yeltsin "an enemy of the people". (AFP)

Net losses for business

Singapore: The Internet will destroy many businesses and The News Corporation, parent company of *The Times*, will not rush into the increasingly expensive sector, the group's chairman and chief executive, Rupert Murdoch, said yesterday. While confident of the future of traditional media, he told a broadcast industry group: "The Internet will destroy more businesses than it will create in the sense that it will wipe out the middlemen." (Reuters)

Hindus burn church

Delhi: Hindu zealots attacked a church in western India just hours after Atal Behari Vajpayee, the Prime Minister, visited the area to try to halt a wave of violence against Christians. The church in the Dangs district of Gujarat state was set alight, Father Dominique Emmanuel of the Catholic Conference of Bishops said. Six churches and missionary schools in Gujarat were torched by Hindu extremists during the Christmas period. (AFP)

Fax of life

Perth: Australians besotted with their jobs rather than their partners have been urged to turn off their faxes and turn on their lovers. Young couples were being affected by *Tins* (Two Incomes, No Sex), Dr Denis Cherry, of the Perth Human Sexuality Centre, said. He advised couples fearing they were heading down the slippery *Tins* slope to escape on a romantic holiday. (AFP)



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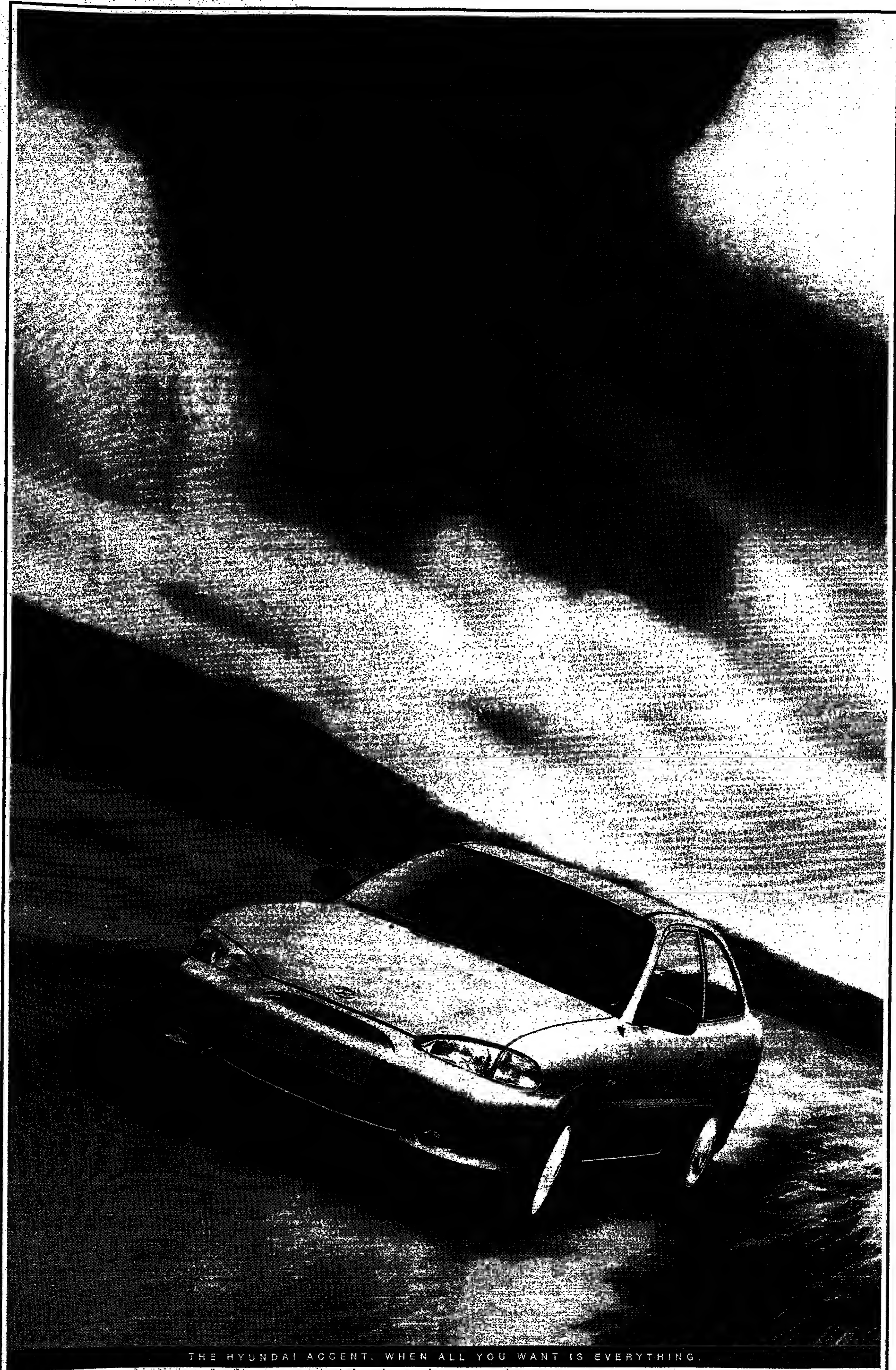
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"UK Automotive Company of the year 1998" following hotly in the footsteps of last year's winners, Audi. To be honest, the Accent makes most people want to kick it up. For further information on the Accent Accent range simply telephone 0800 921 921 or visit your nearest dealer, where you'll find a car that's probably be a lot more appropriate.

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Nation's natural wealth wasted

By MICHAEL DYNES

EVER since diamonds were discovered in Sierra Leone by the British Geological Survey in 1930, the industry has been cursed by an inability to prevent anyone from digging them out of the ground.

The country's diamonds are dispersed over such vast areas that it has been impossible for national authorities to prevent free-lance operators from mining them for sale on the black market.

One of the world's great diamond producers has been virtually wiped out as a result, but the prospect of vast wealth continues to excite interest in the country's natural resources among legitimate and illegitimate business interests.

The Sierra Leone Selection Trust, a British firm, began commercial mining on a small scale in 1934. After it teamed up a few years later with De Beers, the global diamond giant, the industry grew rapidly. By the 1950s Sierra Leone was one of the world's most important sources of gem-quality diamonds.

But things soon began to fall apart. The Sierra Leone Selection Trust could not control the source, Andy Lamont, a De Beers spokesman, said. "Diamonds started appearing on the market from locals. As small operators got involved, the big firms lost control. That's the story of diamond mining in Sierra Leone."

Attempts were made to buy the illicitly mined diamonds, but it was impossible to stem the growing tide of free-lance operators and prevent the loss of revenue for the Government. Mr Lamont added.

Corruption, mismanagement and greed destroyed Sierra Leone's diamond industry, and deprived the Government of vast revenues. De Beers pulled out in 1985 because of the deteriorating political climate. Today the country produces 150,000 carats a year compared with 20 million from Botswana.

Freetown staff had 'a secret channel to Cook'

FROM SAM KILEY IN FREETOWN

THE findings of the report by Sir Thomas Legg, QC, into the Sandline affair — which blamed Foreign Office officials for failing to brief Robin Cook about allegedly illegal arms shipments by the British security company to the elected Freetown Government of President Kabbah last year — have been undermined. Investigations by The Times have revealed that briefings were sent by the officials through secret German communications.

It appears that Peter Penfold, British High Commissioner to Sierra Leone, and other officials were given access to encoded German communications equipment to transmit details of the arms supplies, and activities by a handful of South African mercenaries flying a helicopter in support of West African peacekeepers fighting rebels in the former British colony, with the approval of the German and British Governments and their secret services.

When the Sandline affair was exposed last year, the company had tabled a proposal to send more mercenaries to Sierra Leone to support West

African peacekeepers. "When the British Government says that it did not know, it is quite simply not telling the truth. Not only were communications supplied by the Germans, but these briefings would have ended up on the top of the relevant minister's papers in the morning in Bonn as well as London," said a Western intelligence source.

Mr Cook and Tony Lloyd, the Foreign Office Minister responsible for Africa, told the Legg inquiry and parliamentary committees investigating the affair that they were not informed of support for the plans to send arms and mercenaries to Sierra Leone.

Mr Penfold was criticised last year by Sir Thomas, former Permanent Secretary at the Lord Chancellor's Department, for having failed to keep his masters in London fully informed.

Sir Thomas's report also said that the British diplomats working in Conakry in Guinea, in "exile" from Freetown, were unable to send secure messages back to London, and that this accounted for a breakdown in communications. The



West African peacekeepers search a Sierra Leone civilian suspected of being a rebel in Freetown, where the battle to control the capital continues

explanation raised some amusement among British diplomats at the time, who pointed out that a Queen's Messenger carrying a diplomatic bag would have been perfectly secure.

But use of the secure German communications channels not only shows the high level of clearance given to the backing for Sandline's negotiations, but also implies that the secret method of communication was kept from Sir Thomas and parliamentarians involved in the later investigations.

"The British were able to use the German channels whenever they wanted. This

went on for several weeks and had to have had clearance at the highest levels.

"Even allies are reluctant to allow one another to use their equipment. This was a unique

line, even if they did not approve. It is absurd to, therefore, suggest that ministers in Bonn knew, but that Cook and company did not," said the Western agent.

'When the Government says it did not know, it is not telling the truth'

set-up and strongly implies that other members of the European Union — who often share their intelligence — were, at the very least, aware of what British diplomats were talking about with Sand-

line, even if they did not approve. It is absurd to, therefore, suggest that ministers in Bonn knew, but that Cook and company did not," said the Western agent.

Cape Muslims threaten to avenge death

FROM R.W. JOHNSON IN JOHANNESBURG

BOTH the South African Government and Muslim groups moved rapidly yesterday to defuse tension after the death of Yusuf Jacobs, the protester hit in the head by a police plastic bullet during a demonstration against last week's visit by Tony Blair.

Earlier, Salie Abadah, head of security for a Muslim vigilante group, had threatened that it would "make South Africa ungovernable", should Mr Jacobs die. Given the group's violent record and the serious state of public order in Cape Town's Muslim community — last year saw about 600 terrorist incidents, including the explosion of 70 pipe bombs — this threat was being taken seriously by the police.

Mr Jacobs was shot during a protest by a pro-iraqi group in the Cape calling itself Muslims Against Global Op-

pression. Mr Abadah, of the vigilante group People Against Gangsterism and Drugs (Pagad), said yesterday that Mr Jacobs was also a member of Pagad, the first time a direct link between the two groups had been made.

It seemed, however, that the Government had struck a deal with Pagad. Azhar Cachalia, the Security Secretary and one of numerous Muslims in the ANC Government, announced that President Mandela will set up an inquiry into Mr Jacobs's death.

Pagad spokesmen, meanwhile, said that a planned protest march after Mr Jacobs's funeral had been cancelled, and announced that they wanted to sit down with "good policemen" to discuss the affair.

The police, for their part, continued to insist that they fired on the demonstrators only after they saw them reaching for guns from a passing vehicle. The police also announced that they be-

lieve links exist between a car bomb attack at Cape Town's Waterfront development, which injured three people on New Year's Day, and the bomb attack in August, also at the Waterfront, which killed two people at a Planet Hollywood restaurant.

Earlier, there was a pipe-bomb attack on a Kentucky Fried Chicken outlet in Cape Town. The chain is seen by Muslim extremists as a symbol of US consumer culture and it has told franchise-holders to step up security.

Most South Africans are bemused by the continuous rumble coming from Cape Town's 360,000-strong Muslim community and by the pronouncement which Islam has assumed in South Africa since 1994. Fewer than 2 per cent of the population are Muslim, but there are three Muslims in the Cabinet. Among Africans there is much resentment of "Mandela's Indians" and a general expectation that Thabo Mbeki,

once he takes over as President, will move to cut back sharply their numbers in government.

Jakes Gerwel, the Cabinet Secretary, who is also the director-general of President Mandela's Office, is to travel to Libya to intercede with Colonel Gaddafi to surrender the two Lockerbie bomb suspects. The initiative, a direct result of Mr Blair's visit, seeks to exploit the special relationship between Mr Mandela and Colonel Gaddafi.

Ironically, the Government's links with Libya may also provide Pretoria with leverage in dealing with its Muslim extremists. The fact that the Cape Town bombings came so soon after the bombing of the US Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania last August has led most to assume that the Cape Town terrorists are acting at the behest of anti-American groups in the Arab world. If so, few are better placed than Colonel Gaddafi to exercise a restraining hand.

Harare editor held over 'revolt' report

FROM JAN RAATH IN HARARE

MILITARY police yesterday arrested the Editor of a Zimbabwean newspaper after it reported that the authorities had arrested 23 soldiers for urging their comrades to rebel against President Mugabe.

Mark Chavunduka, 34, Editor of *The Standard*, was still at Cranborne military barracks last night in the custody of the Army's special investigations branch. His lawyers were refused access. Clive Wilson, *The Standard's* proprietor, said an application for his release would be made to the High Court today.

Military and secret police also interrogated another jour-

nal at the newspaper's offices yesterday. They threatened to use "other avenues of extracting information" when he refused to give them further information.

Earlier, Moven Mahachi, the Defence Minister, delivered an enraged attack on the country's independent press. He denounced as "treasonable" a series of critical reports about Zimbabwe's military operation in the Democratic Republic of Congo aimed at preventing President Kabila's overthrow by Tutsi rebels.

Mr Mahachi said *The Standard's* report of the 23 arrests.

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Michael Jordan set to retire

FROM GILES WHITTELL IN LOS ANGELES

MICHAEL JORDAN, by common consent the greatest player in the history of basketball, is expected to announce his retirement this week after a record-breaking career that drew millions to his sport and billions to his backers.

Jordan, 35, who led the Chicago Bulls to six national championship titles and earned more than \$60 million (£36 million) in the past two years, excluding endorsement deals, will hang up his trademark black boots rather than play out a basketball season, truncated by a bitter dispute between management and players, officials said.

Bald, 6ft 6in tall, and unmatched in his athleticism and will to win, Jordan singlehandedly made basketball the most lucrative professional sport in America, pumping an estimated \$10 billion into the national economy over 13 seasons. Unlike many fellow stars, he provided the game with some of its most memorable moments without developing an arrogance to match, struggling off controversy about a costly gambling habit to become, in one poll, one of Americans' "most respected newsmakers" along with Mother Teresa, Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King.

Jordan averaged 31.5 points a game over the course of his career, making him the National Basketball Association's Most Valuable Player a record five times. Cliffhangers were his speciality. He snatched the winning points in the final seconds in 26 NBA games.

Simon Barnes, page 40

New skirmish in no-fly zone as Britain turns for help to Iran

FROM IAN BRODIE IN WASHINGTON AND MICHAEL THEODOULOU IN NICOSIA

AMID growing tension in the Gulf an American F16 fighter fired on an Iraqi radar site in the northern no-fly zone yesterday, the sixth skirmish since the end of Operation Desert Fox more than three weeks ago.

The latest action came as William Cohen, the US Secretary of Defence, claimed that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's new refusal to recognise no-fly zones demonstrated that he was becoming increasingly "irreconcilable and aggressive".

In response to the deepening crisis, a senior British official will today hold talks with leaders in Iran, which said it was working towards a peaceful solution. Derek Plumbley will be the most senior Foreign Office official to visit Iran since the Islamic Republic distanced itself from the farwa against Salman Rushdie last September.

"Iran is an important regional player and a valid interlocutor on Iraq," a Foreign Office spokesman said. Mr Plumbley, the Foreign Office director for the Middle East and North Africa, will also discuss other bilateral issues during his two-day visit.

Mr Plumbley's trip follows continued efforts by Iraq to improve relations with its former Gulf enemy. Iraq told a visiting Iranian envoy yesterday that it was keen to boost ties and formally invited Vice-President Hassan Habib to Baghdad for talks.

The US Secretary of Defence, visiting Japan, said Saddam appeared to be increasingly cornered since the end of the cruise missile and bombing raids by America and Britain.

Mr Cohen claimed that the four days of attacks in December were "one of the most successful" military operations ever carried out and as a result Saddam was now "starting to act up".

"He is lashing out verbally, rhetorically, against the Saudis, against the Egyptians, against the Kuwaitis," Mr Cohen said. He vowed that America would give no ground in enforcing the no-fly zone restrictions and warned that Saddam's forces would pay a penalty for continuing to attack or lock on to US and British aircraft with radar beams.

In yesterday's fracas, an F16 fired a missile at a radar site near the city of Mosul in northern Iraq and returned safely to its base in Turkey. The American pilot had picked up a signal from an early-warning radar that was considered a threat.

With tempers running high, America is boosting its air power over southern Iraq with eight additional F16s and four aerial tankers, bringing its aircraft in the region to 200. In addition, Kuwait has put part of its military on full, combat-ready alert in response to Iraqi "threats" to Gulf Arab states.

Against this backdrop, Iran has emerged as a potentially valuable regional mediator. Hours before the Iranian envoy, Mohammed Reza Sadr, met senior Iraqi officials yesterday, Iran's Foreign Ministry chided Baghdad for apparently renewing its territorial claim to Kuwait. It added that Mr Sadr would visit "other regional countries" with a view to resolving the crisis through



Cohen speaking of Iraq in Japan yesterday

diplomatic means. Tehran has condemned last month's allied airstrikes and frequently expresses sympathy for ordinary Iraqis, but it has also urged Baghdad to respect United Nations Security Council resolutions, particularly on disarmament.

Iran was on the receiving end of Iraqi chemical weapons attacks during their eight-year war. Iranian officials have also blamed Saddam for giving America the pretext to boost its military presence in the Gulf.

The Pentagon, meanwhile, is claiming that damage caused by Operation Desert Fox was more severe than initially reported. Unconfirmed intelligence reports suggested that the raids had killed 600 to 1,600 members of Saddam's

Republican Guard, according to General Hugh Shelton, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Earlier, senior American officers had deliberately avoided such "ambiguous body counts" a practice that contributed hugely to a credibility gap before the war in Vietnam was lost.

As evidence of anti-Saddam discord in the southern no-fly zone, the US State Department said "opposition sources" had ascertained that summary executions of suspect military officers and dissident civilians had reached nearly 500 in the past two months. Among the victims were the commanding general and senior staff officers of the 11th Mechanised Division.

But while Saddam may seem increasingly isolated, so too are Britain and the US at the Security Council in wanting to maintain both military pressure and sanctions against Iraq. There are concerns in Washington that the three other permanent members — Russia, China and France — will find support for a softer approach towards Iraq from four countries that have just become council members: Malaysia, Namibia, Canada and the Netherlands.

The political battle also involves the future, if any, for Uncom, the weapons inspectorate. Its chairman, Richard Butler, insisted that it was "not dead" even though his inspectors have all been expelled by Baghdad and he has suspended flights by American U2 spy planes over Iraq.

The security council's search for a less intrusive role for Uncom could lead to the departure of Mr Butler, whose dismissal was again demanded by Russia.

Jerusalem hunt for serial killer

BY CHRISTOPHER WALKER IN JERUSALEM

THE Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, gave a warning yesterday that a would-be Jewish serial murderer had been in action again in Jerusalem after an Arab in his fifties was knifed near the ultra-Orthodox Jewish district of Mea Shearim.

Mr Netanyahu said that the police were actively pursuing the assailant, who might have been responsible for eight previous stabbings since November 1997, two of them fatal and all following roughly the same pattern.

The latest attack came less than 24 hours after police had ordered extra security precautions around the Walling Wall, Jerusalem's most sacred site, in reaction to threats of a grenade attack against Jewish worshippers by Islamic extremists.

Israel radio reported that the 57-year-old victim was stabbed near Mea Shearim at about 5.30am as he was on his way to work.

Last month an Arab man who was also on his way to work was stabbed with a knife whose markings led the police to suspect a Jewish extremist.

"It looks like the same serial murderer that we are looking for. I still cannot say this definitively, but that is the way it appears," Mr Netanyahu said as the investigation continued.

Yair Yitzhaki, Jerusalem's police commander, cited the district, the time of the attack, and the single knife wound as elements that made the latest attack similar to the previous ones.

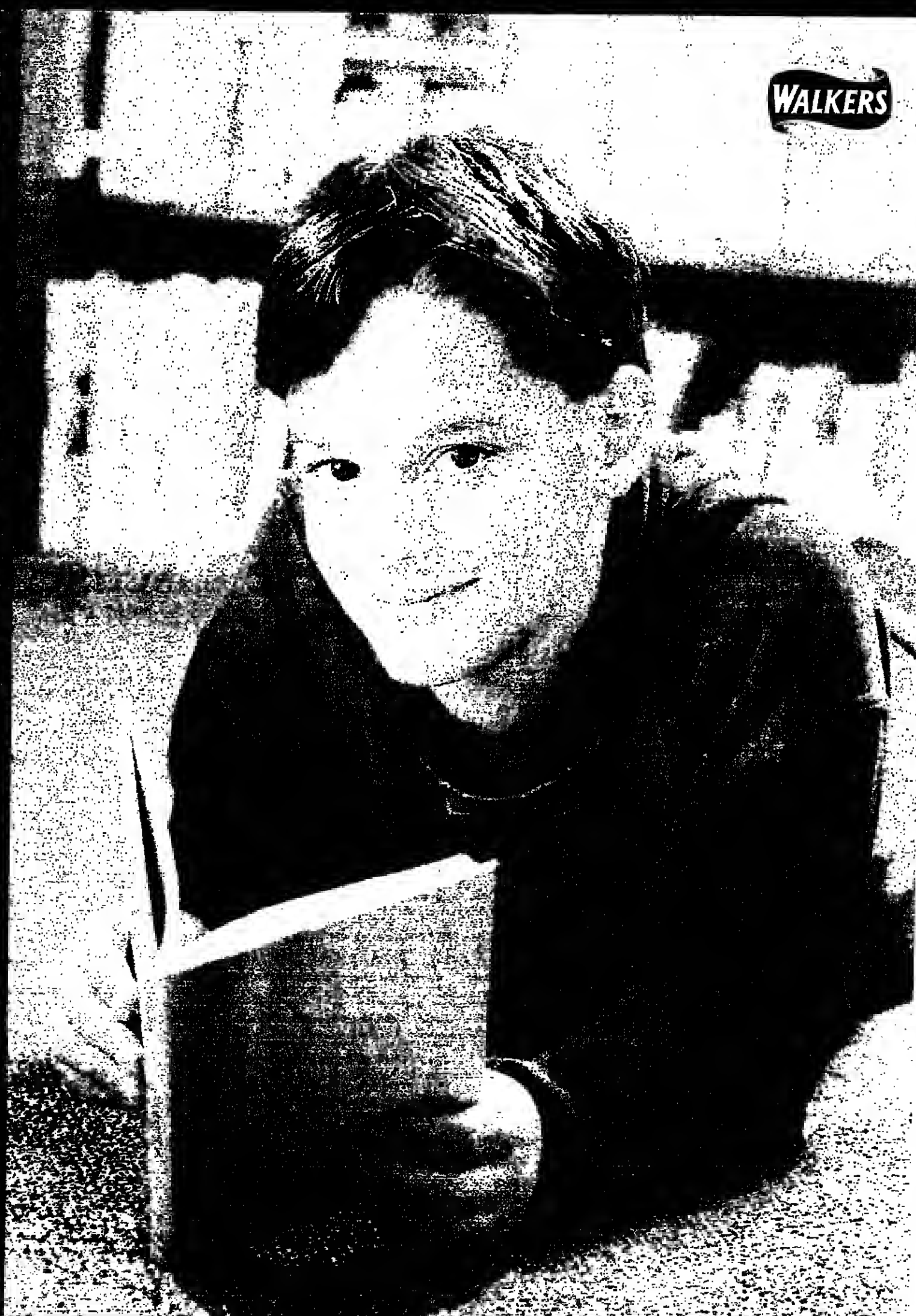
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SEE THE BACK PAGE OF SECTION ONE FOR TODAY'S TOKEN

CHANGING TIMES

What happens if the bugs take over?

The first speaker in our Scientists for the New Century lecture series explains how antibiotics are losing the war against deadly bacteria. Interview by Anjana Ahuja

Several years ago, a rash of books predicting medical doom appeared. With provocative titles such as *The Coming Plague*, they foresaw an apocalyptic future where superbugs would reign supreme with antibiotics powerless to stop them.

Some experts viewed these predictions as scaremongering. Others, including Dr Martin Westwell, a young scientist from Oxford University who has been studying the structure of antibiotics, thought these nightmarish visions were disturbingly plausible. "In 1963, the Surgeon-General in America said it was time to close the book on infectious disease," Dr Westwell says. "But now we have Lords select committees discussing strategies to combat infections because drug-resistant bacteria is such a massive problem."

As Dr Westwell will reveal on January 27 at London's Royal Institution in the opening lecture of the Scientists for the

New Century series, sponsored by *The Times*, bacteria that are resistant to all known antibiotics have begun to emerge.

"In the late Eighties, it was shown that bacteria could gain resistance to Vancomycin, which is sometimes called the antibiotic of last resort," the 27-year-old chemist recalls. "Then a few years later, one case popped up in Japan and two in America. There was nothing that doctors could do for them except give them lots of antibiotics in the hope that they might help the patient's immune system to recover."

The immune system of those patients managed to outwit the bacterial invaders and, fortunately, no more cases have been reported. But scientists know that it could be just a matter of time. Once an antibiotic is introduced, it typically takes only a few years for a bacterium to acquire resistance to it.

"It isn't overdramatic to say we are on the edge of an apocal-



Dr Martin Westwell: "If we go back to a time when antibiotics are useless, and people have to go into hospital because they have an infection, the NHS will go under."

ypse," Dr Westwell says in his gentle Wigan accent. "If these bugs get a foothold in hospitals, we are going to be defenceless in the war against infection. At the moment, large hospitals employ doctors and nurses to keep tabs on what is going on, to make sure the bugs don't take over. For example, if the virulent MRSA (methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus) bug is found, wards are closed and everyone is isolated until the infection is cleared. But smaller hospitals and nursing homes don't always have such measures in place, so there is always a risk of bugs getting out. We could go over the precipice at any time."

That, Dr Westwell says, would be an absolute disaster for the NHS. "The NHS was saved by antibiotics because people could just go and get medicine from their doctor in-

stead of going into hospital," he explains.

"We've just seen the flu crisis, which shows how stretched everything is. If we go back to a time when antibiotics are useless, and people have to go into hospital because they have an infection, the NHS will go under."

However, there is hope on the horizon in the shape of LY333328, a compound found in the soils of Borneo which is being tested by the Eli Lilly pharmaceutical company. It appears capable of exterminating the bugs that the most potent current antibiotics — Vancomycin, included — cannot kill.

Meanwhile, Dr Westwell, who holds a Glaxo junior research fellowship in biological and medicinal sciences, is one of many scientists who hope to design molecules that can com-

bat the superbugs. To design such drugs though, experts must deduce exactly how antibiotics extinguish harmful bacteria. Yet, despite the importance of these drugs, fundamental knowledge of how they go about their business is surprisingly hazy.

This is one reason why Dr Westwell accepted the fellowship at Oxford rather than a position at Harvard University. He sets his own research agenda, which allows him much greater independence. The alternatives are working under the guidance of a senior scientist and so restricting his area of study, or seeking funding from a government research organisation — such as the Engineering and Physical Sciences Council or the Biological and Research

Sciences Council — which rarely allocates money for very basic science.

Moreover, it is almost impossible for relative novices with no track record to obtain money. The usual practice is for a young scientist to apply in the name of a senior member of a department; sadly, resulting success is not always credited to the right person.

Like many other talented young researchers trying to make a name for themselves, Dr Westwell finds the system frustrating. "I have no individual track record, so I would find it hard to get funding, but how do you get a track record in the first place if nobody funds you?"

Promise is no guarantee. Dr Westwell says he has seen top-rated research proposals fall by the wayside because there isn't enough money to go

around. The result, he says, is a "do or die" culture in the higher echelons of science. "To survive, you really have to be at the top of your field."

He is making a sacrifice for his independence — although bearing the prestigious Glaxo name, his fellowship pays less than a standard research position. These jobs are modestly remunerated; a 25-year-old researcher who has just attained a PhD can expect a starting salary at a university of about £16,000.

Dr Westwell's wife Valerie works as a mathematics teacher to boost the family income (they have a one-year-old son, Charlie). Supporting a family and paying a mortgage would be no problem on an industry salary, he says, but he will stick with universities because an academic career offers more intellectual freedom. He

hopes to become a lecturer within five years and top up his salary by taking commercial advantage of his research.

The Times's sponsorship of the Scientists for the New Century lectures reflects growing concerns that, even though they conduct work that could have an enormous impact on our lives, the contributions of young scientists are not always recognised. This is also reflected in their social status.

"To be considered a cultured person, you have to know about the arts and about music and books," Dr Westwell says. "I think that to be a fully rounded person, you should be able to read science articles in the newspaper and be able to talk about it, have an opinion on it. Science doesn't have to be highfalutin. It should be accessible to everybody."

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THE TIMES
SCIENTISTS FOR THE NEW CENTURY

In the first of a new series of lectures starting on Wednesday January 27, Dr Martin Westwell, a young chemist from Oxford University, will describe the war against superbugs. As well as explaining how antibiotics work, he will discuss the frightening prospect that, for the first time in the history of medicine, we have no weapons with which to fight the most deadly infections.

The talk will be introduced by Professor Susan Greenfield, director of the Royal Institution. There will be the opportunity for questions from the audience.

The lecture will be held at 7.30pm at the Royal Institution of Great Britain, 21 Albemarle Street, London W1X 4BS.

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Shedding new light on an eye disease

For the first time a treatment has been developed that can slow down or halt the progress of macular degeneration, the most common cause of blindness in the elderly. The condition affects 16,000 people a year in Britain, and Simon Harding, consultant ophthalmic surgeon at St Paul's Eye Unit of the Royal Liverpool University Hospital, says that the new treatment will offer "some significant benefit" to a third of new cases.

It uses photodynamic therapy in which a drug injected into the body is activated when it reaches the site of a disease by shining light on it. The Liverpool unit has been part of a study of 609 patients at 22 centres in America and Europe, from which the first year's results have emerged. They show that treated patients are a third more likely to retain stable or improved vision than those treated with a placebo.

Macular degeneration affects about a tenth of people over the age of 65. In its most severe, "wet" form, it causes rapid deterioration of vision and most sufferers are registered blind within two years. Some vision survives, but it becomes impossible to read, drive or watch TV. Some patients can be helped by laser treatment, but the great majority cannot. The new treatment has been developed by QLT Phototherapeutics, of Vancouver, Canada, and Ciba Vision Corporation, a division of the Novartis drug giant, which have applied for licences in America, Europe and Canada. It helps only newly diagnosed cases, not those who have already lost vision. Patients are first injected

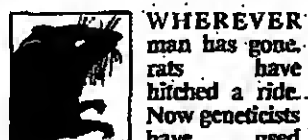


SCIENCE BRIEFING
Nigel Hawkes

with a light-sensitive dye, called Visudyne, by infusing it into a vein. The process takes ten minutes, and then patients wait a further five minutes for the dye to be picked up by molecules in the blood called lipoproteins and circulated throughout the body.

The second stage involves shining a laser into the eye to activate the dye. The cause of the wet form of macular degeneration is the proliferation of new blood vessels in the retina, the light-sensitive part of the eye. Fluid leaking from these vessels robs the eye of its precise vision. The effect of shining red light into the eye is to activate the dye, producing highly reactive oxygen radicals which seal off the blood vessels, preventing leakage and damage. The laser does not produce any heat, so does not damage other parts of the retina. Side-effects are virtually non-existent, says Mr Harding — only a few cases of back pain and tenderness at the site of injection. After treatment the patients have to wear dark glasses for 24 hours.

The results show that in 61.4 per cent of those treated with Visudyne, vision was stable or improved, compared with 45.9 per cent of those treated with dummy injections. This means that the treated group were 34 per cent more likely to retain their vision. "This may not seem a huge difference, but if you or I had the condition we would jump at it," says Mr Harding. He expects the treatment to become widely available within the next year, subject to licensing approval, and is organising courses at Liverpool to train ophthalmic surgeons to do it.



WHEREVER man has gone, rats have hitched a ride. Now geneticists have used genes from rats living on the Polynesian islands to try to trace the history of human migration there. Linguistic and archaeological evidence has already provided strong hints of how human beings spread through the region 3,500 years ago. But confirming this by studying human DNA is a problem because indigenous populations fell victim to European diseases at the end of the 19th century. That makes it difficult to be sure that DNA from modern

Rats show glimpse of the past

Polynesians is representative of the original population. Rats suffered no such setbacks, so Dr Lisa Matisoo-Smith, at the University of Auckland, looked at them. She studied a section of mitochondrial DNA, the sort that is passed down the maternal line unchanged and mutates at a steady rate, providing an evolutionary clock. Rat DNA mutates more quickly than human DNA, so there has been

plenty of time for separate lineages to develop in Polynesia.

The results, reports *Science* Now, confirm earlier suggestions that the Southern Cook and Society Islands formed the focus from which migration to other islands began. "This is clear evidence that people were moving about quite a lot," she says. An exception is found on Chatham Island, whose rats belong to a single related group, suggesting that this island was isolated from the rest.

Dr Patrick Kirch, an anthropologist from the University of California at Berkeley, says: "It's nice to have confirmation of the work in archaeology and linguistics."

TB or not TB, that is a question answered

THE creation of the new International Centre for Life in Newcastle has provided an opportunity for investigating death. The centre is being built on the site of the old Newcastle Infirmary, immortalised in the Geordie anthem *Blaydon Races*, where many victims of tuberculosis were buried.

Infirmary records suggest that 27.1 per cent of those who died there and were interred in the burial ground between 1753 and 1845 suffered from TB.

But how reliable were the diagnoses? A team led by Dr

Angela Gernae and Dr David Miminik, of the University of Newcastle, examined bones from 210 skeletons which were recovered during excavation for the new foundations and tested them for mycobacteria — long-chain lipids that are "markers" of TB infection, which is caused by *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. They wore gloves and masks in case any of the bacteria were still infectious.

The team reports in *Internet Archaeology* — an online journal to be found at <http://www.intarch.ac.uk> — that 24 per cent of the ribs from the burial ground tested positive for mycobacteria, a nice corroboration of the

records. DNA has also been used to detect TB in ancient bones, but the team believes that mycobacteria may be a more reliable marker. Since tuberculosis is strongly linked to poverty, the test may also be useful for assessing how wealthy, and how well-fed, our ancestors really were.

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LONDON BOAT SHOW

Dig that dancing queen? She's about to give birth

Saturday: "Now," bellows Sigrid, our matronly Scandinavian birthing instructor, "this weekend course is specially designed for Manhattan couples with impossible schedules. I will try to squeeze in what would normally take a whole week of evening classes." She passes round badges with our first names filled out and a blank space in which she instructs us to write in our hobbies, "so you can get to know each other over lunch."

Peter fills out our badges. "What shall I say your hobby is?" he asks. "Oh, I don't know. I don't really have a hobby," I say, irritably. He writes "reading pregnancy manuals." On his own badge, he writes "watching television." The woman sitting next to us earnestly writes down "running marathons."

"Now let's have some dancing," shouts Sigrid, hunching over her boombox. "I am Swedish, so we will have Abba." The stuffy room on the 11th floor of St. Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital is soon resonating to "You can dance." You can dance! Having the time

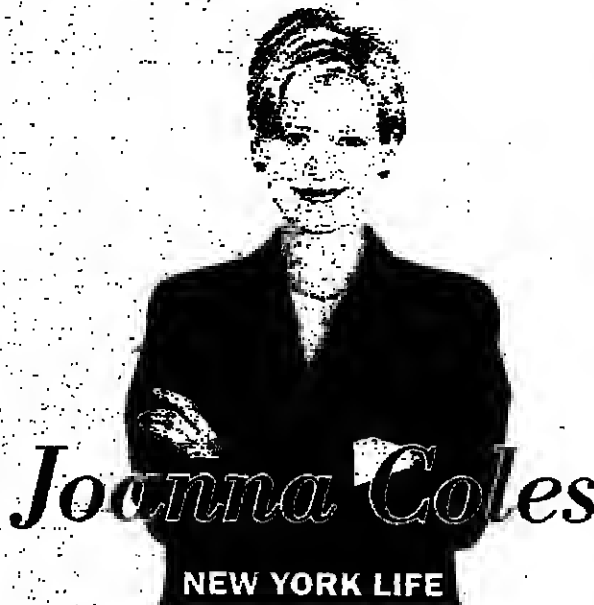
of your life! See that girl! Watch that scene! Digging the dancing queen..."

"Up, up," shouts Sigrid, pulling us out of our chairs to lumber around the room, feeling ludicrous and not digging the dancing queen one bit.

Splendid, let's get the circulation going. She swings her arms like a Canadian Air Force instructor.

It is 9.30am and I am already birth classed-out. You cannot have a baby in Manhattan without being bottled into attending dozens of these classes. Maternity tours, interviews with obstetricians, prenatal and maternal fitness classes, I have obediently attended them all. We even spent one Friday evening at a St Luke's film night, watching programmes of births going wrong to prepare us for the possibility of a Caesarean section. And now one of our precious weekends is to be spent on a weekend crammer course with four pregnant couples whom we have never met and a fierce Swedish matron in a ginger pantsuit.

To be fair, the four other



Joanna Coles

NEW YORK LIFE

couples with "impossible schedules" look similarly fed up. One of the putative fathers, Bill, a biochemist (hobby: sports) has already positioned himself at the back of the group so he can secretly tune in to the football play-

divides us into two groups by gender and asks us to construct lists of best and worst things about having a child.

"Not being able to tie your shoes up," suggests Anna-Marie, the marathon runner and also, it turns out, a chemistry professor.

"Pressure at work," says Susan grimly. "I'm an attorney. I'm due in two weeks. I'm in the office by 9am and I'm not home until 5pm." She looks grey with exhaustion. "I get four weeks paid maternity leave and that's considered good, for a lawyer."

The worst list fills up quickly: pain, lack of freedom, financial worries, family tensions. But apart from the baby itself, we have few suggestions for the best list. "Well, it stops you being so self-obsessed," I offer finally.

"But is that a good thing, I wonder?" asks the lawyer.

After ten minutes the men shuffle back in and, under Sigrid's instruction, we compare lists. Although our worst lists are almost identical, the men's best list is much more optimistic and includes "ev-

erything changes; becoming a family; having a new playmate; getting to watch cartoons; cuddling; genetic immortality." Sigrid, a veteran of 30 years' teaching, seems briefly nonplussed at this disparity. "Hmm, professional women in New York find the birth experience more difficult because they've been used to being in control for so long," she sighs, finally.

Thirty years ago, when she arrived here armed with her master's degree in midwifery from Sweden, she was appalled to discover that most American women in labour

were up two days later to discover they had a baby. "As a result, we lost a generation of birthing stories. Now, what is the expectation of women giving birth in America today?"

"Pain!" wince the lawyer. "Right," cries Sigrid. "You

all think you are going to have such terrible pain that you are going to need a lot of drugs to get through it."

"Are you kidding? I want the epidural in the parking lot," says Anna-Marie.

"Well in Europe — in Britain, for example," Sigrid continues, nodding at Peter and me, "people don't tell each other such awful pain stories."

Resisting the urge to contradict her, I turn to Bill, who is fiddling with his Walkman. "Have you got your nursery sorted out yet?" I ask, aware that his baby is due in three weeks. "Well, we have moved some books," he says, bleakly.

Sunday: The second morning of our course takes on the character of a drama workshop as Sigrid assures us that the fastest way to learn is through role play. This morn-

ing's action is a Caesarean section. I am appointed senior anaesthetist and spend the next ten minutes pretending to administer an epidural while Peter, playing the surgeon, pretends to slice into the abdomen of Anna-Marie, the patient. Sigrid assures us that the easiest way to avoid being overwhelmed by a C-section is to learn all about it.

"Hey, it's just like ER," says Bill, referring to last week's episode in which a man drove his wife, who was in labour, to the hospital but managed to cause a fatal car accident on the way and ended up being dragged away by police just before his wife gave birth.

"Oh God," cries Sigrid crossly. "I've been a consultant to all those damn shows and they drive me nuts. I tell you. You always see the birthing mother screaming and groaning and carrying on like bloody murder. They have to do that to make it exciting, for the drama, right? But that's not the way it ends up being. Remember, birth is normal. Write it down. Birth is normal."

Just another upper class junkie...

The Marquess of Bristol, Britain's most notorious drug user, was not unique. Heroin is a powerful lure to those who seem to have everything, says former addict Sean Thomas

For most people, this week's obituary of Frederick John Harvey, the 7th Marquess of Bristol and Britain's most notorious heroin addict, who was found dead in his home at the weekend, must have seemed full of almost uniquely sad phrases. Here was the "charismatic" heir to a "beautiful Suffolk estate", a "highly generous" aristocrat possessed of an "arrogant and dashing charm" who nonetheless squandered his "immense fortune" on "drugs, lavish parties, cars, helicopters and yachts" before dying a "pathetic" semi-paralytic at 44.

To anyone who has been a heroin addict, these facts and phrases are not uniquely sad. They are, on the contrary, predictable and familiar. The

more bohemian portents of Nottingham Hill, Mayfair, Chelsea and beyond are full of tragic cases like Johnny Harvey. Walk down the Kings Road or Ladbrooke Grove and you will see them: moneyed junkies, wasting trust funds and legacies, estates and inheritances on class A drugs.

Some are genuinely aristocratic (like the Marquess of Blandford), some merely rich: some of them have famous parents (like the late Olivia Channon), some are infamous themselves. Many have Johnny Harvey's arrogant and dashing charm, all lead desperately limited, desperately repetitive lives — mostly spent sitting by the phone in squalid flats waiting for their dealers to return their calls, or trying to locate Daddy to arrange an-

other loan so as to afford the next quarter of an ounce.

I well know this type, the upper-class junkie, because for several years I was also a heroin addict in London and I ran into more than a few of them. It is impossible not to. Central London's hard drug scene (and by hard drugs I mean, primarily, cocaine and heroin) is like a small town within a town, a hidden and incestuous village, a tightly knit network of dealers, contacts, clinics and "well-known addresses".

The drugs underworld is also surprisingly egalitarian: the need for drugs is a great equaliser. Thus it is possible for the crackhead from Hoxton to use the same dealer as the junked-up ambassador's daughter from Kensington, or the poor little rich coke-snorter from Belgrave to end up sharing a needle with the homeless Glaswegian car thief.

I might have been a fairly ordinary, middle-class addict but I think I once saw Johnny Harvey doing coke in a smoky basement flat in Fulham. I can't be sure because I was too stoned. I do know that I have bumped into the Blandfords and Channons of this underworld. I have stared blankly across the same glass-topped tables. I have used the same rolled-up £20 notes to sniff the same "China white". I have sat waiting for the same courier to deliver the same cocaine in the same Hampstead penthouses.

Usually the glass-topped tables and Hampstead penthouses were theirs. Upper-class junkies are nothing if not "highly generous" and hospitable. They hate to feel alone in their vice, and doing heroin can be the most desperately bleak, sad, godless, solitary existence imaginable.

Why, then, with all their chances and opportunities, with the best educations that money can buy, do so many rich and well-born people fall prey to hard drug addiction? It is easy to understand the appeal of a powerful analgesic such as heroin to someone stuck on the seventh floor of an inner city tower block. It is easy to appreciate how you might want to numb your mind and senses if all you could see ahead of you was another week on the dole. But why would an Eton-educated millionaire, heir to a Caribbean villa and a castle in Scotland, want to do the same?

The answer is that the two ends of the social spectrum share one curse: unemployment. People who are rich already have little to do except to make more money. Second (and third, and fourth, and fifth) generation rich people have even less to do: their money and status are taken for granted. Boredom and boredom are therefore the most feared



Shooting up: "Weeks pass and all you have done is to repeat the cycle of the addict's life — score, consume, get stoned"

enemies of the poor little rich girl or boy. And you can only have so many "cars, helicopters and yachts" before even cars and helicopters and yachts start to pall.

Which is where heroin comes in. As anyone who has tried the drug will know, heroin is a sovereign remedy for *tedium vitae*. On heroin, time ceases to exercise its grip. Hours, days, lives can fly by and all you have done is to sit in your flat and dribble. Weeks can pass and all you have done is to repeat the endless but somehow comforting cycle of the drug addict's life: score, consume, get stoned. For people with no job, who do

not need a job, who would never conceive of demeaning themselves with something as common as a job, heroin addiction is a job. It gives shape and purpose to otherwise shapeless, purposeless lives.

The second reason that I believe heroin appeals to the rich, noble and leisured is its dangerous "glamour", its subversive image. For those stupid enough, like me, to try heroin in the first place, it exercises an allure because it is seen as somehow chic, as intriguingly antisocial and transgressive. And it's so easy. If you want people to see you as cool and cynical, as sophisticated and daring, but you are too lazy or

dim to do anything serious about it — like become a soldier, or train to be an artist — how much easier simply to take heroin.

This spurious attraction of heroin as a short cut to "coolness" is assisted by the fact that the drug reinforces the addict's self-esteem, by paralyzing any self-critical faculties that might lurk in the psyche. Thus the painfully anorexic junkie sees herself as fashionably thin; the desperately boring addict sees himself as suavely aloof.

The upper-class junkie might seem a modern phenomenon, but there are historical parallels. Consider the obsession with duelling in the 18th and 19th centuries. Here was another dangerous, possibly fatal, certainly pointless activity. Here was another ludicrously nihilistic pursuit condemned by polite society but indulged in certain upper-class circles. Like heroin, duelling had glamour like heroin, it relieved the awful boredom of the leisured life. The French toffs of *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* would, these days, be smoking freebase in Cadogan Square instead of slaughtering each other with sabres.

Let I seem to be glorifying heroin myself, however, I should add that there is one big difference between the two upper-class vices. When 18th-century aristocrats were not murdering each other at dawn, they were running the world and discovering vaccines and writing *Don Juan*. When modern upper-crust junkies are not doing junk, all they are doing is trying to find more junk so they can do more junk for a while. As the wretched Marquess of Bristol would no doubt attest if only he had the chance, cocaine and heroin are, in truth, about as glamorous as meths. Only more expensive. And more morose. And more pitiful.

HEROIN: THE FACTS

■ **USERS** agree that heroin is seductive, pernicious and now the most fashionable of all the so-called recreational drugs with the young. Diamorphine, to give the killer its clinical name, gives a sense of extraordinary wellbeing and security before relentlessly destroying every victim too weak to quit.

■ **TODAY** the drug is easily available in every city and town in the country. And "smack" is cheap too: at £20 a gram it is a third cheaper than its class A rival, cocaine.

■ **THE** drug can be snorted, injected into veins or smoked — "chasing the dragon". Addiction is as inevitable as death and taxes.

■ **MAIN** producers of the opium poppy, from which heroin is produced, include Turkey, Mexico, Iran and Lebanon. But the big fields are in the so-called Golden Triangle running from Laos through Cambodia and Burma.

■ **THE** hazards of heroin use are appalling: appetite loss, convulsions, vomiting, loss of bowel control, sleeplessness, rotting teeth, impotence in men, infertility in women, and death.

Extant former users include Rolling Stones Keith Richards and Charlie Watts, Eric Clapton, Jamie Blandford, Lou Reed and several supermodels who cannot be named for legal reasons.

Among those who paid the ultimate price: jazzmen Charlie Parker and Miles Davis; Jim Morrison of The Doors; Sid Vicious of The Sex Pistols.

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The Marquess of Bristol, heroin addict, pictured in 1996

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Olé for the tangoing President

Like him or not, you have to admit that President Clinton is amazing. Judged on resilience, he beats all other politicians in the United States hands down.

On Monday night, he led a tango around the White House floor after the state banquet for President Menem of Argentina, wriggling and swooping with a huge grin on his face. Earlier, he had bounced around the Detroit Motor Show, telling company reps — to nervous laughs — that his beloved first car, a Mustang, did not have very good brakes.

On more serious ground, he is firmly set on delivering his State of the Union speech on Tuesday, a chance to remind the American people that the state of the union is indeed great. The economy is barely slowing, the Dow Jones is back to its high points, the dollar is rising against the new euro.

Behind the scenes, his 11-strong legal team has launched a ferocious defence to the charges against him, denying that he committed perjury or obstruction of justice, or that he has done anything to deserve being thrown out of office.

It is a genuinely impressive display. Mr Clinton may have no self-restraint, but he is undeniably tough. His response, when attacked, is to keep going. It is at least one of the qualities you might want in a leader. It is not surprising that the many Americans who still like, or tolerate, Mr Clinton are so reluctant to see him thrown out.

Contrast that with the Senate's stuffy hamfistedness this week, as it found itself finally in the spotlight. Of the many admirable features of the US Constitution, one of the greatest is the inclusion of a formal procedure for deciding whether the President should be sacked. But as the process is playing out now in Washington, it risks becoming a farce.

The Capitol, rising from its snow-covered hill against a dark blue sky, is a backdrop against which any politician looks like a Founding Father. And don't they know it? Senators — who now refer to themselves as the President's jurors — have stood in front of the nation's television cameras in below-freezing temperatures for 20 minutes on end. They have perfected the look: a herringbone overcoat, perhaps with velvet collar, a woolen scarf, under a cap of pure white hair of the kind Washington does so well. The faces are timeless and could grace a banknote or coin from any century.

The words, though, are instantly perishable in their ponderous search for importance. In a town where politicians speak as if testing each other's phrase for inscription on their own memorials, scores have been declaimed: "We are on trial, in how we conduct ourselves, not just the President." Again and again, we have heard them recite George Washington's notion that the Senate is the saucer in which legislation is poured to be cooled, after being heated in the boiling passions of the House. For extra historical weight, dozens have invoked the Senate's Roman predecessor. The taste for classical references provoked gentle satire even from the sober *Washington Post*, which teased Democrat Robert Byrd for mentioning Plu-

tarch, Aeschylus, Solon, Herodotus, Thucydides, Polybius and Xenophon within the space of 30 minutes, but apparently being unsure of Monica Lewinsky's name.

The best antidote to the Senate this week was to walk the frozen mile down the Mall to the new monument to FDR. Spread over a couple of acres, the craggy building blocks are inscribed with dozens of his genuinely memorable speeches, from "I hate war" to "Demoralisation caused by vast unemployment is our greatest extravagance".

But the memorial is also a reminder that the crises he faced deserved that language. The Senate's problem is that its subject does not warrant grandeur. The trial comes down to a debate about whether the President did when he said he did not touch Ms Lewinsky's genitals, and whether it matters if he did.

Part of this week's pomposity stems from senators' frustration. You can have a sliver of sympathy. They have been elected after campaigns of numbing expense to what they have been told are among the most prestigious positions in national life. Chosen for six years, they pride themselves on being more "statesman-like" than House representatives, elected for two-year terms. But for the past four years, since Newt Gingrich's 1994 Republican Revolution, the television screens have been filled with House members, unruly younger siblings noisily seizing hold of the legislative agenda. The Senate's main distinction has been to cool any reforms to the point of freezing. It has initiated some minor legislation, but has blocked scores of judicial, administrative and ambassadorial nominations from the White House, grotesquely undermining the Administration. It also helped to squish attempts at campaign finance reform.

Against that record, we can see what is going to happen. The Senate will have the chance after the opening statements to throw out the whole matter. It is unlikely to take it, given how fond its members seem of the attention. So it will have a trial of sorts — longer by months if it calls witnesses.

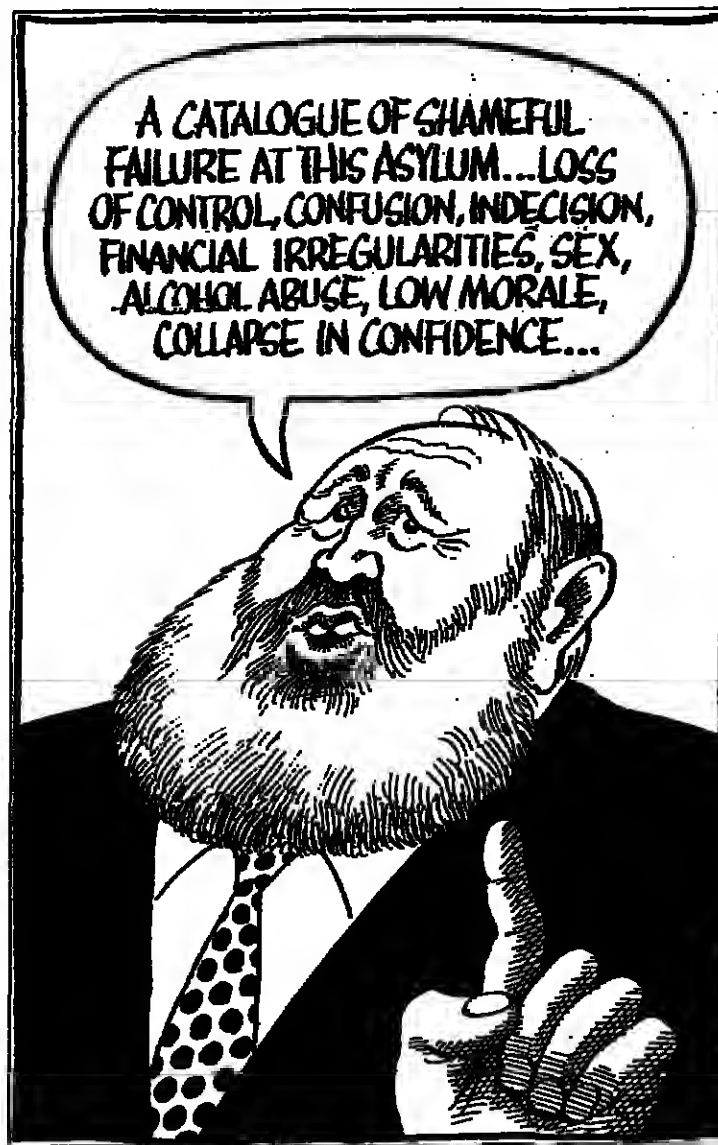
While that process continues, there remains a tiny chance that public opinion will finally swing against Mr Clinton, and that two thirds of senators will find in themselves a need to expel him from office. But it is much more likely that public opinion will stay where it has throughout the saga: firmly against Mr Clinton's early exit. It is then hard to imagine the Senate throwing him out. More likely, it will arrive many weeks from now at a formal expression of censure, the position that many senators already hold.

Many people are understandably uneasy at the image of the happily tangoing President, shrugging off all the charges against him. But the public is still right in its unchanging view that his behaviour does not warrant his removal from office. Much of the Senate appears to agree. If it wants to earn the historical compliments it has showered on itself, it should throw out the trial next week.

comment@the-times.co.uk



Bronwen Maddox



Thatcher's fifth term

The world according to Blair is an eerily familiar place, far from Liberty Hall

After the Project and the Launch comes the Relaunch. You move forward or you die. This week the Blair Government staged a bizarre ministerial floorshow, ostensibly to divert attention from the pre-Christmas resignations. The relaunch was long planned as a mid-term boost to the Cabinet's image, but the seasonal bloodletting gave it a sensational overture.

Relaunches are for connoisseurs. The shrewd general always awaits the second offensive. The wise executive delays his move to head the rescue team. Never buy the prototype, always the redesign. Now that the Government is entering its stride, we have seen the back of those who stood forward in 1997, of the Mandelsons, Robinsons, Whelans and Drapers. They passed muster in the trenches, but not at the chateau HQ. It took Harold Wilson two years to be rid of the human impediments of Opposition, and Margaret Thatcher three years.

Tony Blair is putting his past behind him with impressive speed. Out too has gone the old spin, of community, fitness and decentralism. In their place appears the phraseology of power. The relaunch is said to be about modernisation, discipline and leadership, especially leadership. In a speech this week, Gordon Brown eulogised Mr Blair in terms reminiscent of a Maoist acolyte. A stream of other speeches gushes from Downing Street's devil's kitchen, vetted for political correctness. I have read them. They claim that the new, non-squabble Cabinet has set itself to "deliver on its election promises... push forward with modernising Britain... and deliver clear leadership at home and abroad". These speeches are awful. Mr Blair makes John Major seem a Cicero and Mrs Thatcher a veritable Demosthenes. I defy anyone to distil novelty from such waffle.

But nothing in politics should be taken at face value. The key to this week's Blair relaunch is the lack of anything new to say. And that lack is due to nothing of substance having been launched in the first place. This week's vacuity is embarrassing only to those who misreading the original project. It was, as the trickle of Blairite memoirs attest, simply to win power. Now that power is won, the project is to keep it. The essence of Blairism, as the bard said, "gives to airy nothing but a local habitation and a name".

One of the abiding jokes of British politics is that defeating Mr Major in 1997 required of Mr Blair and his

team superhuman skills of political genius. Another is that this victory instigated a revolution to rank with the fall of the Bastille and the St Petersburg uprising. The true achievement of the Blair team — more properly the Kinnock-Smith-Blair continuum — was more modest. It was to crush the Labour Left. After that, an ape could have beaten the Tories in 1997. No less hilarious is the concept of revolution. There is hardly an action taken by the Government over the past 18



Simon Jenkins

months that would not have emerged from Whitehall had the moon changed and... Mr Major scrambled back to Downing Street. This week has seen neo-Thatcherism rampant. The Home Secretary, Jack Straw, continued to make his predecessor, Michael Howard, seem a wet liberal. Yesterday he ended Labour's opposition to "three-strikes" mandatory sentencing, and extended the invasion of judicial discretion to property crime. He expects to add a further 4,000 young people to Britain's overloaded prisons. Liberalism on crime is now a defunct ideology. The same is true of education. David Blunkett is reimposing Victorian payment by examination results on teachers. At the weekend he proposed privatising local authorities, an innovation at which even the Tories had balked. His edicts on homework, family reading, truancy and league tables would come well from a Wackford Squeers.

At Health, Frank Dobson is hoist on his party's own petard. In Opposition Labour treated health politics as an exercise in statistical terrorism. Mr Dobson is now condemned to death by a thousand waiting lists. When he demands a cut in lists, people die for emergency beds. When he offers more money to nurses, he loses money for drugs. He is another Virginia Bottomley: those who seek credit for everything

are blamed for everything. Over at Social Security, the new regime may or may not clean the Augean stables left by the Tories. One thing is certain, life is going to get tougher for claimants, not easier. Welfare, like pensions reform, are mainstream Thatcherite policies that the Tories never had the guts to implement. The same is true of legal aid, tube privatisation and the sale of air traffic control. There is not a drop of "socialism" to any of this.

Defence and overseas are no different. The Government has kept the Tory nuclear submarines, the Eurofighter, project, and proposed a new generation of aircraft carriers. In foreign affairs Labour is as tied to the coat-tails of America after the Cold War as was Mrs Thatcher (more excusably) during it. In Iraq and Kosovo, Mr Blair loves his role as bombardier-in-chief to the White House. In Europe he began, like Mr Major, to walk tall at its heart and then found events moving him briskly to the periphery. Not a summit passes without an attack of malaise Anglaise. Nothing has changed.

Put this to the more thoughtful denizens of Downing Street and they fall back mournfully on constitutional reform. They are right. Scottish devolution would not have been a Tory measure in its present, radical form, though I am convinced some assembly would now have been conceded. But then I am not sure Labour today would have conceded what was granted so promptly after the last general election. The evidence of the London mayoralty and John Prescott's White Papers on transport and local democracy is that the decentralist enthusiasm of 1997 has all but vanished from "the relaunch". The London Bill now before Parliament depicts the new mayor as a sub-agent of the Secretary of State for the Environment.

To most of this Britain cries

Hurrah. In a perverse way, this is what the 1997 electors appear to have wanted. That was why only 43 per cent of them voted Labour. They booed Mr Major off stage, but not his policies. Whatever the Blairites may like to claim, the 1997 election was precisely to change personalities not policies. Mr Blair has recognised this. He has kept taxes down and pandered to Middle England in everything from education, transport and law and order, to hunting and duty-free shopping.

Old Labour is not the only casualty of this phenomenon. So too is old Liberal and old Tory. The Third Way was supposedly between Left and Right, but has swerved out and is overtaking the Tories to the Right. Small wonder William Hague can make so little impression. But Mr Blair's neo-Thatcherism is of a peculiar sort. On the libertarian-authoritarian spectrum, he leans heavily to the latter. His is the Thatcherism of wider regulation and a highly centralised government sector. Ask any doctor, farmer, teacher or small businessman whether he feels more or less "free" under Labour and you will get a raspberry for a reply.

Under Mr Blair as under Mrs Thatcher, intermediate institutions are distrusted. He believes in Downing Street as the fountainhead of all patronage (even who should be Poet Laureate), but also as sole conduit of political accountability. He is not the man to accord constitutional subsidiarity to Parliament, the judiciary, the professions, the unions or local government. Blairite democracy is what de Tocqueville classified as direct democracy. It uses the media to address the nation over the head of party and Parliament, and uses pollsters to hear the nation's response.

The political content of such government is impossible to define since it is a residual of market research: it is free-market and Thatcherite, fiscally conservative, authoritarian and centrally ordered. Its watchwords are not social justice but efficiency and value for money. It is essentially illiberal since its middle-income constituency is essentially insecure. Yet the public supporting this programme clearly outnumbers those whom it neglects. This world according to Blair is an eerie place. How long it can last remains a mystery.

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Cook's round

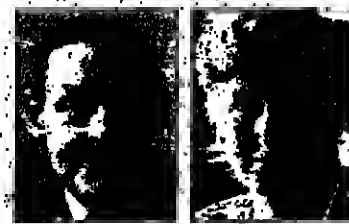
AS ROBIN COOK braced himself for his former wife's allegations that he was a drunk, he was buying refreshments at an off-licence. Saturday afternoon saw him pop into Victoria Wine in Westham, three miles from his weekend pad, Chesham in Kent, and bag two boxes of booze. In his thirst, he left a portfolio in the shop. The manager chased after Cook to return it. "He was obviously going to have a drink," ventures a punter.

Next day, Margaret Cook said she had once found the Foreign Secretary reclining on a dining room floor, thirst sated. His friends denied the slurs. "Barry Harman was 'astonished'," Confused, I rang the FO. It refused to comment, then rang back: "He was buying wine for two dinner parties." How jolly.

INSPECTING the posterior of that magnificent creature, Peter Mandelson, has been Sir David Attenborough. Alarmed by extreme tales about the former minister, he examined Peter's behind in a box at the Albert Hall. No, he couldn't find a demonic pointed tail, he told Mandelson — who was unamused.

Not versed

THE widow of T.S. Eliot (both pictured) has said no contemporary poet is talented enough to become Poet Laureate. She has urged me to



tell No 10 to veto the shortlist. "I don't see what the rush is. Look at what has gone before" — the talent of Hughes and Beckett which is not matched now. They should wait until there is someone outstanding. Paul Muldoon could be perfect in a few years." Perfectly dull, perhaps.

PRIM matrons in Hampshire are wiling because of plans for an annual Benny Hill festival. The comedian immortalised Eastleigh in his song Ernie the Milkman (he worked on the town's floats, giving him inspiration for life) and local historians want to mark his birthday. "We will have floats, with locals dressed as Benny, and a milk horse," says Gordon Cox, of a local history club. Says a local pillar: "Bikini bimbos are just not us."

Off spinner

THE son of Glenda Jackson, the former Oscar-winning actress, is a candidate to take Charlie Whelan's job as Gordon Brown's spinner. Dan Hodges has managed to sell Steve Norris, the energetic head of the Road Haulage Association, to a surprised public. But he might blanch at plotting a "Norris for Mayor" campaign, especially if his Mum runs for Labour. Like Whelan, he is a regular at the Red Lion pub, and is popular with ministers.



many of whom he has known as friends of Glenda since childhood. "It's time to hang up my CB radio. I will be leaving the RFA soon. I am interested in working for the Chancellor." Good luck, matey.

A RAG invites readers to bid for lunches with celebs, to chew over the careers of Rory Bremner, Dorey Russell, or Alastair Campbell. Fimin, muck-raking for lunch.

Low spirits

SINEAD O'CONNOR, the rebellious Irish rock chick who ripped up a picture of the Pope, has been told she can become a priest. The offer of ordination is from dissident Bishop Pat Buckley, excommunicated after marrying divorcees. Buckley says O'Connor has a "deep spiritual element". So deep, that she describes her devotion to God as "something for myself".

JASPER GERARD

'Don't worry about the dreaded millennium bug. With a bit of luck, we may never even get there'

I know, even as I strum these opening bars, that I shall hate myself in the morning: because that is when I shall see this stuff in print, and know that you are hating me, too. Yet, much as I hate your hating me even more than I hate hating myself, I have no professional option: it is the traditional lot of the soothsayer to get the sooth said and then wait to be not merely hated but stoned, blinded, incinerated, chucked over cliffs, and generally given the burn's rush for doing no more than his duty to say it, if the said sooth is not what his listeners want to hear.

And you will not want to hear mine. For despite the fact that I am giving you 210 days' warning of the sooth, there is nothing you can do about it, except spend

those days growing ever more anxious as each one passes. And God knows you are anxious enough already: indeed, there may well be far fewer of you around than usual to read and hate me tomorrow as the result of your having once again sprung up early to hurdle from shop to shop, filling your car-bots with soap, pilschards, fags, whiskey, candles, aspirins, razor blades, mint cake, long-life milk and big fat books, thanks to the scant 352 days you thought you had until the arrival of the only thing you thought you had to be anxious over because you couldn't do anything about it.

Well, the good news is that you may have 142 fewer days to drive yourself nuts at the prospect of January 1, 2000, and the bite of the bug that will fill the welkin

with Ukrainian missiles, change all the traffic lights to blue, cut off your utilities, blow your pension fund on loose women, and force you into the cellar to survive as best you can on your Tesco hoardings. The bad news is that you may not have to endure those 142 days of anxiety because you may not get past August 11, 1999.

I know this because I have spent the weekend reading about total eclipses. With one single exception these are a bad thing, and since that single exception exists only in fiction, you can see how truly bad a thing they are. The exception is Victorian stories involving English schoolboys in

Alan Coren



Polynesian cooking-pots, where, just before the chums come to the boil, a total eclipse causes the Puzzy-Wuzzies to flee in terror, so that their lunches have only to wait until the Sun reappears to burn their bonds with a magnifying glass and paddle home to Eton.

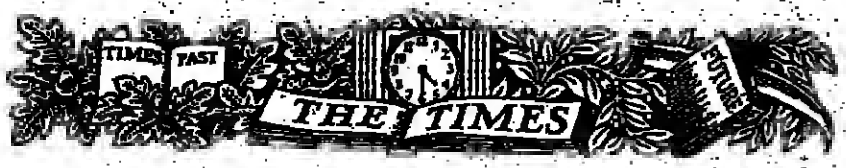
In real life eclipses are not as benevolent: the history of the blot-ted Sun is an unrelenting record of death, destruction and mayhem, a tale of plague and shipwreck, fire and flood, rapine and mania. To pluck just one from my many sources, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* cannot record an eclipse without observing that cows dropped dead,

dogs grew feral, crops withered, and bishops went mad.

And those were simple days; simpler by far than next August 11, when stiff cattle and barking clerics will be the least of our concerns. I note, for example, that five million visitors will be heading for Cornwall's unparalleled eclipse view. How will they get there when, with barely a century to anticipate the demand, the Department of Transport has had neither the time to lift the Hornton contrail nor the clout to persuade the rail companies to lay on the extra carriage they have been building since 1991? Will the emergency services be able to cope with the ensuing chaos, the rages which follow it, the casualties which follow that?

How can they, they cannot cope with anything now, how will it be with half of them off work and trying to get to Cornwall? And never mind Cornwall, can the NHS handle the vast numbers of nationwide injuries, occasioned by people walking into things in the blackness, getting crushed by falling cows, and bitten by crazed pets or bishops?

I snatch these horrors at random, for who can guess what terrors await us when the Sun goes out, leaving villains to plunder unchecked, Cabinet ministers to be distracted by all sorts of unlit mischief, or even (he's a strange cove, your Johnny Sun) computers to blow a gasket? Then again, might I be fretting for nothing? Might, right this minute, the Prime Minister be working on an Eclipse Initiative?



IN EUROPE'S NAME

The European Parliament should vote out the Commissioners

Jacques Santer is right about one thing, and wrong in every other aspect of his handling, both arrogant and self-exculpating, of the European Parliament's challenge to the Commission. The President is right that only "zero tolerance" will put the Commission's management of public money "above reproach". Yet the only zero tolerance that he himself has shown is of the whistle-blowing by honest officials from within his own walls. His barefaced assertion this week that "we are a victim of our own transparency" would alone justify an ample majority in the European Parliament tomorrow for the vote of censure that would force all 20 Commissioners to stand down.

Mr Santer, who took office in 1995 promising that his Commission "will do less, but do it better", has had four years in which to clean the stables of nepotism, cronyism and corruption. How little has changed since the Delors heyday is best illustrated by last November's annual report of the Court of Auditors, which for the fourth year running qualified the Commission accounts because €3 billion, 5 per cent of the total budget, was fraudulently spent or could not be accounted for. Citing "systematic failures to apply requisite checks", it concluded: "The incidence of errors affecting transactions... is so high that the Court has had to give an adverse opinion on legality and regularity."

If the EU were a business, in other words, its directors would be facing the courts. The report found a €2.8 billion understatement of the Commission's "off balance sheet commitments". The gaps hide a tale of faked contracts and building projects, of officials trading bribes for jobs, of ghost workers and of sinecures, for friends, such as the contract Eddi Cresson, the Commissioner for youth training, gave her dentist for advice on Aids. The latest audit discovered that €600 million allocated to repairing 65 unsafe nuclear power plants in Eastern Europe had been lost, wasted, embezzled or left unspent.

The Commission's response shows the culture at work. It admits that there were no records for the €600 million but insists that it was not wasted and that "only" €2 million was being investigated for fraud. Without accounts, how could it know? To the ostrich reflex, add obstruction. The Court's President, Bernhard Friedrichmann, complains that the Santer Commission blocked with "untruths" his auditors' efforts to investigate €420 million of what the Commission calls "book-keeping errors" — money that vanished from the

EU's 1993-95 humanitarian aid budget — and fraudulent aid contracts worth a further €1.7 million. Police investigating corruption in security and tourism budgets have had to battle against non-disclosure of documents and the Commission's reluctance to lift officials' immunity. It was the Court, not the Commission, that forced the closure of the Mediterranean programme because of serious abuses, cited by Mr Santer as proof of his zeal. Mr Santer says that Uclaf, his internal anti-fraud unit, tackled 5,000 fraud cases last year. Even if that were credible — it has only 30 staff — barely 50 officials have been disciplined and only eight dismissed.

"If fraud in the European Community goes on as it has," Herr Friedrichmann believes, "it could bring down the whole of the EU." Mr Santer has this week had the gall to berate Göran Persson, the Swedish Prime Minister, for saying much the same. But in the looking-glass world of EU politics, the likelihood is that it will not even bring down this Commission.

Last November Mr Santer dared the European Parliament to back him or sack him, knowing that its only power is the blunderbuss of a censure vote against all 20 commissioners, just and unjust alike. The dominant Socialist group has abetted his gamble: it has been exhorting behind the scenes by Germany and Britain to avoid an hiatus until a new Commission was appointed. This argument is spurious; the best Commissioners could be part of a new team determined to sweep Brussels clean. It is better that there should be a short crisis than a Commission shorn of credibility hanging on for a final year.

To lure MEPs into making fools of themselves by backing down, Mr Santer has thrown them a few German-made bones of accountability. But he has stood by Mme Cresson, whose Leonardo programme is riddled, internal auditors report, with "the misappropriation of funds", and by Manuel Marín, head of humanitarian aid when vast sums went missing and, now, of the disgraced Med programme. Even if a strong majority passes resolutions denouncing them tomorrow, neither is expected to go gracefully.

That leaves the blunderbuss. The EU Parliament is a glass house from which to throw stones. But, while the expenses MEPs claim are scandalous, the censure vote is their chance to show that they are not craven as well as venal. With an eye on this year's EU elections, MEPs should block their ears and vote for censure in Europe's name.

YEMEN AND FINSBURY PARK

Unanswered questions from killings and kidnap

The arrest of five British Muslims in Yemen is embarrassing because it suggests that the kidnappers who seized their Western hostages were inspired by Islamic radicals in this country. It is disturbing because the Yemeni authorities have neither charged nor freed the men, amid evidence of mistreatment in prison. What is also plain is that Britain is still seen abroad as a haven for Islamic extremists.

The link between the kidnappings and the arrests centres on the Finsbury Park mosque in North London, where the imam, who makes no secret of his wish to overthrow the Sana'a Government, was in contact with the kidnappers after the Birmingham Muslims, including his own stepson, set out for Yemen. Under Sheikh Abu Hamza, the mosque has become a notorious centre of extremism. Pamphlets circulated here a few years ago calling for the killing of foreigners in Algeria. Omar Bakri Mohammed, who tried to organise a rally of Muslim anti-Western activists in 1996, is associated with the mosque. Many local Muslims are so incensed by the extremism preached there that they have publicly dissociated themselves from it.

Whether or not the mosque has been running training camps, it is disturbing that London should have become so significant a centre for those calling for

Islamic revolution. Britain has come under attack from its friends in the Middle East and Europe for its "long tolerance of activities that would be clearly criminal if directed against this country; these include the plotting, material support and advocacy of terrorism. Under legislation tacked on to the emergency anti-terrorism Bill after Omagh, the first two are indeed now illegal. The Government has meanwhile tried to reassure France, Germany and others that it will not allow London to become the centre of global Islamist plots.

Yet if the Yemeni charges are upheld, Middle Eastern regimes locked in struggle with Islamist groups will use London as a scapegoat, insisting that all local terrorism is masterminded from abroad. Some, like the radicals in Britain, have an interest in exaggerating the influence of splinter groups. This is unjust to the vast majority of British Muslims, who are appalled by the glorification of political violence that does such harm to the perception of Islam. As Britain's Muslims approach Eid al-Fitr, the joyful feast marking the end of Ramadan, they do not want to be associated with kidnappings and subversion preached by a few fanatics trying to build up a following. Islam is a noble religion; the law must be invoked against those whose violent creeds debase it.

BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT

The DSS should look with sympathy at deaf ex-servicemen

All too often Conservative ministers in the last Parliament appeared to make decisions more on the literal application of rules than the spirit behind them. One example, shortly to be re-examined by this Government, concerned the conditions under which former servicemen may claim additional benefit payments for loss of hearing linked to their time in uniform.

Until 1996 this extra income could be awarded in one of two circumstances. A claimant would be immediately compensated if, at the moment of leaving military life, he or she had suffered at least a 20 per cent loss of hearing as a result of excessive noise encountered during service. Others who had suffered lesser but notable hearing loss would be entitled to a rising increment in benefit over time as they too approached this 20 per cent figure. The logic behind this second section was that either there would be an after-effect of hearing loss incurred through service or that the noise encountered during these years made premature deafness much more probable.

Two years ago, the last Government declared that new scientific evidence had undermined the basis for this latter

category. There were no secondary effects of partial deafness after the initial noise-related incidents had occurred and virtually all subsequent additional loss of hearing was a result of ageing. This change saved the social security budget £35 million; and left veterans outraged. They were supported by David Clark, the Shadow Defence Secretary, who argued that the switch ran against "all conventional medical evidence and is a smoke-screen to save money".

In 1998 Baroness Hollis of Heigham announced that the new Government now accepted the data on which its predecessor had altered past arrangements. The minister acknowledged that this was an area of controversy and offered a further review by independent experts that will be completed next month. The Royal British Legion has sought, without success, to persuade the Government to spend £20,000 on fresh research on the cumulative loss of hearing. Ministers will not find it easy to persuade the public that those who suffered during Service life are not more likely to endure deafness later. Their case will be stronger if they have ensured that every avenue of proper inquiry has been fully exhausted.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1 Pennington Street, London E1 9KN Telephone 0171-782 5000

High standards demanded of those in public life

From the Vicar of Jesmond

Sir, In supporting Robin Cook (report, January 11), Tony Blair seemed to dismiss the issues relating to the private life of his Foreign Secretary as "scandal, gossip and trivia". The Prime Minister wanted to get back to "the things that really matter".

But the breakdown of marriage and the marriage-based family does "really matter". Even if you ignore the private human damage, there are public exchequer costs. According to government estimates the annual "costs to the public purse of marital breakdown" are a staggering £5 billion (Research Paper 96/42 p74), and that excludes all hidden costs. Surely it does "really matter" that £5 billion is not potentially available for the current NHS crisis, or for education.

The sexual immoralities and marriage failures of public figures who should set public standards are a proper public concern. They cannot be dismissed as "trivia". They call for repentance. Lord Nolan, the chairman of the Committee on Standards in Public Life, when interviewed soon after Tony Blair took office, said: "Of all the behaviour which in my personal experience has caused the greatest misery to other human beings, I would put adultery pretty high on the list. I don't actually think you can expect a man with the strains of public life to perform adequately unless he has got a good home life to go back to."

Yours faithfully,
DAVID HOLLOWAY,
7 Overburn Terrace, Jesmond,
Newcastle upon Tyne NE2 3AP,
January 11.

From Mr Alan Challoner

Sir, In her comment on the Margaret Cook book extracts ("A divorce of convenience", January 12), Libby Purves writes: "The only test of any action is whether it does good, and who can possibly benefit from this post-marital character assassination?"

Well, I believe we all can; if only

because it serves as a reminder that, ostensibly, politicians are representatives of our society, having all the values and faults that are contained within it.

The shell of superiority with which many of them clothe themselves is a part of the act that is meant to protect them from being seen as ordinary mortals and to delude themselves into believing that any special gifts that they might have outweigh other considerations.

In the end, all politicians' beliefs are self-serving. The accommodations of their position offer them some respite from what the rest of us must suffer as a result of their indulgences.

Yours faithfully,
ALAN CHALLONER,
Bodelwyddan,
Denbighshire LL18 5UR,
January 12.

From Mr Michael Stewardson

Sir, So Labour and the Prime Minister want an end to "gossip column" politics (don't we all). Funny: seemed to suit them well enough in opposition.

Yours sincerely,
MICHAEL STEWARDSON,
6 Old Main Road, Pawlett,
Bridgewater, Somerset TA6 4RY,
January 11.

From Mrs Susannah Chapman

Sir, How sad to have a Foreign Secretary who leaves his admirable wife for his secretary. I am amazed how much newspaper has been taken up by the examination of the issues surrounding what used to be known as his "private life", just at a time when he and the Prime Minister have dragged us all into some very serious moves in the Middle East. I am very much more concerned by the increasing lack of diplomatic judgment he has shown than any domestic failings. Why should the UK abandon the

UN and all its careful approach in this thoughtless way? The raids on Iraq have caused huge damage to the development of international diplomacy in the region.

Why should we take a solitary policeman's role in the Middle East? We are no longer an empire and need a united approach with the rest of Europe.

Why should we play lapdog to Clinton whose judgment and timing must have some relation to his own domestic interests?

When a Muslim radical declares on television that our Government is guilty of international terrorism, I find myself in the astonishing and very sad position of agreeing with him.

Yours sincerely,
S. CHAPMAN,
Dove House,
Sutton, Suffolk IP9 2SD,
January 12.

From Mrs Patricia Perry

Sir, It has never been enough to be clever: those who demonstrate a lack of balanced judgment in their private lives invariably run the risk of showing the same unfortunate quality in their business and public activities.

How does the reputation of Great Britain stand now throughout the world?

Yours truly,
PATRICIA PERRY,
Long Meadow, Church Street,
Charlbury, Oxfordshire OX7 3PP,
January 11.

From Mr Simon Levene

Sir, It would have been nice if the Foreign Secretary had had an ethical domestic policy as well.

Yours faithfully,
SIMON LEVENE,
20 Berwyn Road,
Richmond upon Thames TW9 1SB,
January 10.

Blair and the Lib Dems

From Earl Russell

Sir, Peter Riddell ("Blairism at a turning point", January 11) says that any movement of opinion "has been from Labour to the Liberal Democrats, rather than to the Tories. This suggests a mini-protest, rather than any fundamental shift in opinion". This prompts the reply: "Opinion on what question?"

Tony Blair's support has been so high because he has enjoyed the support both of those who voted for him because he was a change and those who voted for him because he was not. The fact that he has lost support to the Liberal Democrats suggests it was those who believed he was a change who are now disillusioned.

If Blair takes Peter Riddell's advice, the number of those disillusioned will grow, and so will the number of Liberal Democrat supporters.

Yours sincerely,
RUSSELL,
House of Lords,
January 11.

Nursing shortage

From Mrs Frances Storr, SRN

Sir, You are absolutely right to say that in order to tackle the current nursing crisis ministers need to take a fresh look at nurses' training (leading article, January 11; letters, January 12). While student nurses do spend time on the wards, much of their training now takes place in the classroom. No one would dispute the value of this, but for a practical job like nursing, classroom training should come second to practical experience.

By bringing student nurses back to the wards we would take pressure off trained staff; a competent student nurse is quite capable of taking a considerable amount of responsibility.

Students would get most of their training where they need it — doing the actual job. And the huge amount of money currently spent on classroom training (do student nurses really need to be taught such subjects as gender studies and sociology?) could be channelled towards a more realistic salary on completion of training.

Yours faithfully,
FRANCES STORR,
Bleak House,
Coppellhall, Stafford ST18 9BW,
January 11.

Future for the flag

From Mr Stephen Flook

Sir, If at some time in the future Scotland were to gain its independence, what would become of the dear old Union Jack?

The thought of our flag being deprived of its Scottish element is depressing. However, could its retention in its present form be justified?

Yours faithfully,
S. A. FLOOK,
Court Lane Vineyard,
Ropley, Alresford,
Hampshire SO24 0DE,
January 12.

Business letters, page 21

Letters for publication may be faxed to 0171-782 5046. e-mail to: letters@the-times.co.uk

Organ donors' 'presumed consent'

From Professor Roger Williams and Mr Robert A. Sells, FRCS

Sir, The agreement of the British Medical Association ethics committee that the profession should consider dropping their opposition to the removal of organs for transplantation without the express permission of the deceased (but in the absence of recorded objection) — so called "presumed consent" — represents a major shift in medical opinion (report, December 28). It has been supported by a major report in *The Lancet* (May 30, 1998).

Much of the resistance of doctors in the past to such a change in the law related to a worry that it might provoke an acrimonious debate, damaging public confidence in transplantation as a whole. We feel, like the BMA, that this is no longer likely to be the case, provided that the change is preceded by informed public debate.

Other measures for encouraging consent during life through the National Donor Register have had a limited impact. It would, in our view, be more informative and useful if the register was modified to include objections to donation as well as consent.

In Belgium less than 2 per cent of the population have recorded an objection to the use of their organs since 1986, when "presumed consent" legislation was introduced into that country. Since then organ donation has substantially increased.

An additional statutory responsibility on hospitals — namely the early detection of suitable donors — would also increase the number of organs. This has been achieved in Spain by increasing the number of transplant co-ordinators and extending their role. The number of Spanish organs donated per million population is nearly double that in this country.

There is unequivocal, published evidence in the medical press that these

two initiatives are effective in other European countries in closing the gap between transplant organ supply and demand. We therefore strongly back the BMA in its proposal.

Yours etc,
ROGER WILLIAMS,
Director, Institute of Hepatology,
University College London,
ROBERT A. SELLS,
Consultant transplant surgeon,
Royal Liverpool University Hospitals,
Institute of Hepatology,
University College London,
Harold Samuel House,
69-75 Chenies Mews, WC1E 6HX,
January 5.

From Mr T. T. King, FRCS

Sir, In wishing to shift opinion in favour of the recipient's rights to an organ and away from the donor's to agree, the BMA's ethics committee is proposing what I imagine is a new ethical principle: if one person has need of something belonging to another who apparently no longer needs it, it may be taken without consent.

It has always seemed to me that there have been two problems for transplant surgeons in their search for donors. One is that as suitable cases become available mostly by accident the supply is likely to be chronically inadequate. The second is that there is probably latent among those caring for suitable donors in their terminal state a distaste for the business.

The BMA proposal may do something to sidestep the second but is unlikely to solve the first.

Yours sincerely,
T. T. KING,
Ridgeway, Hutton Mount,
Brentwood, Essex CM13 2LX,
January 1.

Beachy Head cliff fall

From The Chief Scientist at English Nature

Sir, I was puzzled by the comment in your interesting report on the cliff fall at Beachy Head (January 12) that this was proof that coastal landmarks are under threat.

Erosion created landmarks such as Beachy Head, and the cliffs are kept fresh and white by cliff falls. Without erosion the vertical white cliffs would stabilise and become covered by vegetation, turning green and losing much of their special landscape value. This has happened where chalk cliffs have been protected from the sea.

There is no doubt that our coastline is changing and, as the Environment Agency says, this process is probably speeding up. This presents us all with a real challenge, but in seeking to meet it we should not forget that the coastline we love has been shaped by natural forces, including erosion.

The lesson I take from Beachy Head is that if we want a living coast rather than a sterile, ugly, expensive and ultimately unsustainable concrete mess we will have to learn to live with change rather than always seeking to prevent it.

Yours faithfully,
KEITH DUFF,
Chief Scientist, English Nature,
Northminster House,
Peterborough PE1 1UA,
January 12.

Time warp?

From Mr David T. Staples

Sir, Mr Edward Russell (letter, December 30) queries the correct naming of years in the next century. Two thousand and odd or twenty and odd.

In 1968 Arthur C. Clarke and Stanley Kubrick made the definitive science fiction film *2001* (pronounced two thousand and one). They seem to have set a precedent.

Yours sincerely,
DAVID T. STAPLES,
11 St Luke's Church,
42 Mayfield Road, N8 9LP,
dstaples@tpc-lon.com
January 2.

Light on the subject

From Mr Jim Pearman

Sir, Philip Howard (January 8) asks how people did their intricate work with so little light in days gone by.

I had an elderly relative who made lace using a small oil lamp with the light focused through a spherical bottle. This produced a spot of light about one inch in diameter; just enough to enable her to work.

Yours faithfully,
JIM PEARMAN,
Brouwerijstraat 29,
1840 Steenhuffel, Belgium,
jim.pearman@compaq.com
January 8.

Did Paris have Roman origins?

From Professor J. G. Evans

Sir, Parisians should not be cast down by the findings of an archaeologist at the Ancient Paris Commission which suggest a Roman, rather than Gallic origin for their city (report, January 8). The paucity of remains beneath the Roman city Lutetia and, in particular, the absence of streets, houses and the earthworks of an oppidum are no hindrance to the area having been an important focus of Celtic life.

Oppida often enclosed an area of several tens of hectares, but they are an enigmatic type of site and served a multiplicity of purposes, varying from cattle enclosures, sites of prestige or ritual, to meeting places.

Importantly, they were not always formal settlements or proto-towns: even Caesar saw some hillforts with no urban characters as oppida. Indeed, there may have been oppida without earthworks at all, with just the place being important — a cleared area of woodland set aside for annual meetings and ceremonies and later put aside for grazing cattle. In Britain, York, Roman Eboracum, founded in an area of intensive Iron Age pastoralism, is on just such a site.

The methods of environmental archaeology like pollen analysis and soil science should be used to examine the surfaces beneath Roman Lutetia for traces of woodland clearance, pasturing, and other signs of intensive land use.

The natural features of the site, too, may be weighed in favour of a pre-Roman origin, with a major river, several side streams, hill pasture and lowland meadows, all typical of many oppida.

Yours sincerely,
JOHN EVANS,
Department of Archaeology,
University of Cardiff,
PO Box 90, Cardiff CF1 3NU,
January 9.

Hendrix v Segovia

From Mr Martin Pearce

Sir, Mr Graham Wade's letter (January 7), extolling the claims of his hero, Segovia, over those of Jimi Hendrix to be included in your People of this Century, betrays reactionary hallmarks more characteristic of the last.

He says that Segovia "dominated everything represented by [Hendrix's] culture of cacophony, drugs and bizarre behaviour". Surely one man's "cacophony" is another man's sweet music. I personally am not keen on opera, dance, rap or jungle music but I would never write them off.

Il drugs and bizarre behaviour disbarred anyone from claims to genius Coleridge, Byron, Mozart and Picasso amongst many others would have to be excluded.

Hendrix's brilliantly innovative use of amplifiers, feedback and white noise, as well as his incredible stage act, are still widely admired and emulated today. Just because he was prepared to experiment both with his music and ultimately his life doesn't make him any less a candidate than Segovia might have been.

Yours faithfully,
M. PEARCE,
The Chapel, Church Lane,
Islip, Oxfordshire OX5 2TA,
January 8.

From Mr P. Bingley

Sir, Whilst Mr Wade put forward an otherwise convincing case for including Segovia over Jimi Hendrix, he did fail to indicate whether Segovia's abilities stretched to playing the guitar with his teeth.

Yours faithfully,
P. BINGLEY,
4 Palatet Close,
Bradford on Avon BA15 1US,
January 7.

True lies?

From Mr John Hicks

Sir, You report today that, in a test devised by a management expert, anyone who answers "true" to the question "I have never unknowingly told a lie — true or false?" is placed under suspicion.

That is unfortunate, because to anyone who understands the ordinary use of the English language there can be no other answer.

We all often unknowingly say things which are not true, but that is not lying. A false statement is a lie only if intentional. To lie unknowingly is a contradiction.

Yours faithfully,
JOHN HICKS,
17 Montagu Square, W1H 1RD,
mandhicks@btinternet.com
January 7.

From the Reverend Dr Peter Cameron

Sir, The only appropriate answer to the question "Have you ever unknowingly told a lie?" is the one Mr Cromyko is reputed to have given to a journalist who asked him at a summit conference if he had had a good breakfast:

"Possibly."

Yours faithfully,
PETER CAMERON,
St Mary's Rectory, Birnam,
Dunkeld, Perthshire PH8 0BJ,
January 8.



COURT CIRCULAR

SANDRINGHAM HOUSE

January 12 Mrs Christian Adams has succeeded The Hon Mary Morrison as Lady in Waiting to the Queen.

ST JAMES'S PALACE

January 12 The Prince of Wales, Duke of Cornwall, this morning received the Secretary of the Duchy of Cornwall, Mr Robert Ross.

BUCKINGHAM PALACE

January 12 The Prince Edward, Prince of Wales, this morning attended the London International Book Show at Earls Court, London SW5.

Today's royal engagements

The Princess Royal will present the Institution of Incorporated Engineers Young Woman Engineer of the Year Award 1998 at the Society of Arts, John Adam Street, London, WC2 at 12.00; and as president, Royal Yachting Association, will attend a luncheon at the London International Boat Show, Earls Court, SW5, at 12.45. Later as president, British Knitting and Clothing Export Council, she will attend the British Apparel Export Awards at the Royal Lancaster Hotel, London W2.

Birthdays today

Mr Craigie Aitchison, painter, 73; Sir Jonathan Birkbeck-Petersen, former Premier of Queensland, 88; Mr Richard Blackford, composer, 45; Mr Michael Bond, author and creator of Paddington Bear, 73; Dr Sydney Brenner, CBE, FRS, molecular biologist, 72; Sir John Cairnes, civil servant, 66; Mr Gordon McVie, director-general, Cancer Research Campaign, 54; Sir Colin Raftery, golfer, 55; Sir Colin Shepherd, former MP, 61; Mr Bernard Shrimley, journalist, 68; Mr K.C. Turpin, former Vice-Chancellor, Oxford University, 84.

Anniversaries

BIRTHS: Ian van Goyen, landscape painter, Leiden, The Netherlands, 1596; Charles Perrault, writer and collector of folk tales, Paris, 1628. DEATHS: Edmund Spenser, poet, London, 1599; George Fox, founder of the Society of Friends, London, 1691; James Mackintosh, biblical critic, Edinburgh, 1800; John Scott, 1804-06 and 1807-23, London, 1838; Fabian Bellingshausen, polar explorer, Russia, 1802; Stephen Collins Foster, songwriter, New York.

Narrowing the gap in arts and crafts

BY DALYA ALBERGE ARTS CORRESPONDENT

CLOTHES that no one could ever wear, because they are made of porcelain and wood, are among works of art that will be shown in an exhibition challenging perceptions about the fine and applied arts.

Janice Blackburn, the award-winning curator of the exhibition opening at Sotheby's in London next month, is determined "to show that there is a much narrower gap" than some might think. "The big difference is in terms of pride," she said, expressing despair at artists, fine art galleries and collectors who look down on the decorative arts as "crafts". "Old fashioned, outdated, something that smacks of open-toed sandals and hanging baskets".

Real dresses dipped and preserved in porcelain by Tiziana Bendall-Brunello, or gowns sculpted in wood by Victoria Metcalf, she said, are no less conceptual than the work of Cornelia Parker, short-listed last year for the Tate Gallery's Turner Prize for



Tiziana Bendall-Brunello working on one of her dresses in her Cambridge studio.

works that included displaying a man's white shirt on a coat-hanger and dangling bits of cutlery from the White Cliffs of Dover. "Craft can be challenging, as well as beautiful and functional."

She spoke of the difference of attitude among artists, dealers and collectors. "People who make things have to struggle more. In a sense they are much more accessible. People who do fine art feel

they don't have to discuss their work with anybody... What this means is that people are missing out on an opportunity to buy great work. So-called contemporary collectors think there is a stigma attached to it. Craft is a stumbling block to collecting."

Ms Bendall-Brunello, who came to Britain from Italy ten years ago, described her porcelain clothes as "conceptual" - "yet I use a media that is

porcelain, associated with tableware". It depends how you use it, she said. Producing porcelain clothes was a way of freeing something in time, which one could not do with a fabric. At the same time, it produced an evocative image. The exhibition, which runs from February 4 to 11, mixes recent graduates - the Scottish art schools are among the most prominent - with more established artists.

Forthcoming marriages

Mr M.R.M. Banham

and Miss B.S.G. Meyer. The engagement is announced between Mark Richard Middleton, son of Sir John and Lady Banham, of St Bryan, Cornwall, and Virginia Sarah Grace, daughter of Mr and Mrs Carl H.A. Meyer, of Harborne, Birmingham.

Mr M.J. Barnes

and Miss F.D. Smedley. The engagement is announced between Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, between Michael, son of the late Mr Bruce Barnes and of Mrs Fay Burns, of Cullinan, South Africa, and Fiona, daughter of Mr and Mrs Derek Smedley, of Lilley, Hertfordshire.

Mr D.G.I. Cleary

and Miss E.K. Gibney. The engagement is announced between Dennis Geoffrey Lissant, son of Mr Anthony Cleary, of Ashway, Warwickshire, and of Mrs Georgina Macpherson, of Craigmoun, West Sussex, and E.K. Gibney, daughter of Mr and Mrs John Gibney, of Guesling, East Sussex.

Mr P.R. Dickinson

and Miss J.B.M. Turnbull. The engagement is announced between Piers, elder son of Mr William Dickinson, of Corbridge, Northumberland, and Mrs Rose Turnbull, of Corbridge, Northumberland, and Joanna, only daughter of Mr and Mrs Anthony Turnbull, of Surlingham, Surrey.

Captain G.R. Francke, FWRR

and Miss M.J. Bainbridge. The engagement is announced between Giles, son of Mr and Mrs John Francke, of Chelwood Gate, Sussex, and Magdalena, daughter of Mr and Mrs Bryan Bainbridge, of Eastbourne, Sussex.

Mr C.R. Hamilton

and Miss F.D. Edwards. The engagement is announced between Charles, son of Major and Mrs Charles Hamilton, of Hamwood, Co Meath, Eire, and Frances, daughter of Mrs Edwards and the late Major Richard Edwards, of Haslemere, Surrey.

Mr S.R. Hawker

and Miss J.E. Ingham. The engagement is announced between Stuart, eldest son of Mr and Mrs R. Hawker, of Upminster, Essex, and Joanne, only daughter of Mr and Mrs Peter Ingham, of Hinton, Essex.

Mr Q.S. Holland

and Miss L.M. Pollen. The engagement is announced between Quinton, son of Mr Brian Holland and Mrs Nick Holland, and Louise, youngest daughter of Viscountess Sidmouth and the late Mr Francis Pollen.

Dr C.R. Jaspert

and Miss V.L. Lardner. The engagement is announced between Christopher, son of Dr and Mrs R.J. Jaspert, of Providence, Rhode Island, USA, and Victoria, elder daughter of Mr A.J. Lardner, of Eastcott, Wiltshire, and Mrs S.M. Reinisch, of Aurora, Ohio, USA.

Mr W.D. Kelly

and Miss S.M.R. Cairns. The engagement is announced between William David, son of Mr and Mrs William Kelly, of Dublin, and Sarah Marjory Russell, only daughter of Mr and Mrs William Cairns, of Edinburgh.

Mr N.A.P. Kent

and Miss J.L. Bailey. The engagement is announced between Nicholas, youngest son of Mr and Mrs Kenneth J. Kent, of Moor Park, Farnham, Surrey, and Jane, daughter of Mr and Mrs Ronald G. Bailey, of Guildford, Surrey.

Mr J.D. Reed

and Miss J.E.I.D. Conran-Smith. The engagement is announced between Jonathan, eldest son of Mr and Mrs Robert Reed, of Haywards Heath, and Jillie, elder daughter of Mr David Conran-Smith and the late Mrs Rose Conran-Smith, of Chockbridge, Angus.

Mr R.W. Reed

and Miss K. Matic. The engagement is announced between Rupert, younger son of the late Mr Arthur Reed and of Mrs Reed, of London, SW1, and Katherine, daughter of Mr and Mrs Rodoljub Matic, of Valjevo, Yugoslavia.

Mr R.C.W. Reader

and Miss S.M. Peel. The engagement is announced between Rupert, son of Brigadier and Mrs James Reader, of Ashmore, Dorset, and Susie, daughter of Mr and Mrs Peter Peel, of Haslop, Derbyshire.

Captain J.R.C. Seale

and Miss L.F. Cowling. The engagement is announced between Captain Jonathan Seale, The Royal Dragoon Guards, son of the late C.O.M.H. Seale and of Mrs Seale, of Fleet, Hampshire, and Lynne Frances, daughter of Mr and Mrs C.F. Cowling, of Malvernshire, Wiltshire.

Mr T.J. Vaughan-Hughes

and Miss C.A. Stiger. The engagement is announced between Timothy, only son of Mr and Mrs John Vaughan-Hughes, of London, and Corine, younger daughter of Mr and Mrs John Stiger, of Sydney, Australia.

Mr A.M.S. Wedderburn

and Miss R.J. Watson. The engagement is announced between Michael, third son of Mr and Mrs Andrew Wedderburn, of Monmouthshire, and Kathryn, daughter of Dr and Mrs Gavin Watson, of Paisley, Renfrewshire.

University news

Peterhouse, Cambridge. The Rev Jonathan Ben Quash (Peterhouse and Fitzwilliam College) has been elected Dean, Chaplain, Cathedral and Official Fellow at Peterhouse, Cambridge.

School announcements

Bedstone College

Spring Term began on Monday, January 10. 15th Anniversary celebrations begin this term with an Inaugural Service conducted by the Visitor, the Bishop of Chichester, on Sunday, January 17. The Shakespeare Society present Coriolanus between March 10 and 13. Woodard Lectures take place on January 14, February 9 and March 16. Later in the year, all former pupils are invited to attend the Old Juniors Reunions which for pre 1960 members will be on Saturday, May 1, for 1961-1990 on Saturday, May 22 and for 1991-1998 on Saturday, June 12.

Eton College

Eton College opens today for the Lent Half. P.N. Morley Fletcher KC continues as Captain of the School and C.P.W. Fielding OBE as Captain of the Opinions. The examination for Junior Scholarships will be held on January 30 and the examination and interviews for Sixth Form Scholarships on February 12 and 13. The Business Studies Conference starts on February 22, and Long Leave will be from February 25 to March 1. There will be services of Confirmation in College Chapel, conducted by the Visitor, the Bishop of Lincoln, on March 12 and 14. School closes on March 24.

Hurstpierpoint College

Term started on Monday, January 10. 15th Anniversary celebrations begin this term with an Inaugural Service conducted by the Visitor, the Bishop of Chichester, on Sunday, January 17. The Shakespeare Society present Coriolanus between March 10 and 13. Woodard Lectures take place on January 14, February 9 and March 16. Later in the year, all former pupils are invited to attend the Old Juniors Reunions which for pre 1960 members will be on Saturday, May 1, for 1961-1990 on Saturday, May 22 and for 1991-1998 on Saturday, June 12.

Merchant Taylors' School

Term begins today and ends on Friday, March 26. The Duologues Competitions take place in the Studio Theatre on Wednesday, February 10. The School Concert is at Merchant Taylors' School, at 6.45pm on Monday, March 8, and the Orchestral and Choral Concert takes place in the Great Hall on Monday, March 22. The Visit by

Frederick Durrenmatt will be performed from March 18-20 in the Studio Theatre. Jamie Lane is Captain of Hockey, and the XI tour to Belgium at half-term. The School hosts the regional finals of the European Youth Parliament competition on February 24. PHAB week begins on March 27.

Royal Russell School, Croydon

A reunion for Old Russelliens who were at Ballards or Russell Hill Schools will be held on Saturday, May 8, 1999. For details please telephone 0181 657 4433.

St Margaret's School, Bushey

The Spring Term at St Margaret's School, Bushey, begins today and ends on March 26. Charlotte Burn continues as Head Girl and Azza Kassam as the Deputy Head Girl. This year marks the 25th Anniversary of the foundation of the school. The Right Rev D. L. Eames, Bishop of Ely, will be invited to launch the Thanksgiving Celebrations on the first day of term. There will be a 1749 Day for pupils on February 12 and a Dinner for former Head Girls of the School on Monday, March 22. Her Majesty's Band of

the Royal Marines, Portsmouth, will give a concert in the school grounds on May 15 and Speech Day will be on July 9. The main Service of Thanksgiving will be held at St Paul's Cathedral at 2.30pm on St Margaret's Day, Tuesday, November 11.

Wymondham College, Norfolk

Term started on January 11 at the College and building work has started on the new Elm building for English, History and Religious Studies. This term's drama production will be part of the National Theatre Schools Competition which the College has been invited to enter. The History department will be taking students to visit Normandy and the D-Day Landing Beaches at half term. The GCSE Geography trip is to take place at the end of term and the students will visit Spain. The Service of Confirmation will take place in the College Chapel with Right Rev Malcolm Martin officiating on Sunday, March 22. The Principal will take up his Fellowship at Churchill College, Cambridge. Open Days for this term will be held on the Saturday mornings of February 6, March 20, May 8 and June 12.

BMDS: 0171 680 6880
PRIVATE: 0171 481 4000

PERSONAL COLUMN

TRADE: 0171 481 1982
FAX: 0171 481 9313

BIRTHS

COOMBS - On 11th January, to Annabella and Edward, a son, William James.

DAY - On 2nd January, to Suki and Owen, a son, James Archibald John.

DRING - On January 8th 1999, to the Portland Hospital, to Edwin (nee Newsome) and Patricia, a daughter, Annabel Louise.

FLANAGAN - On January 6th, 1999, to Louise (nee Crumley) and Benjamin, a son, Benjamin Louis.

HACKNEY - On January 8th, 1999, to Louise (nee Thomas) and Elizabeth, a daughter, Elizabeth Laura.

KENDALL - On January 10th, 1999, to Stephen and Vianchi (nee Forbes), a son, Leo Sebastian Douglas.

KOPPER - On January 8th, 1999, to the Portland Hospital, to Suzanne and Mark, a girl, Bailey, a sister to Victoria and Sarah.

KIMBER - On January 10th, 1999, to Sarah (nee Ayscough) and David, a son, Tishan Alexander Bartholomew, a brother for Imogen.

MILLER - On January 11th, 1999, to Catherine and Christopher, a daughter, Anna Penelope, a sister for George.

PETTS - On December 18th, 1998, to Diana (nee Laird) and David, a son, William John, a wonderful brother for Victoria.

PITMAN - On January 6th, 1999, to Elizabeth (nee Noel) and Henry, a son, Luke David.

PRITCHARD-SMITH - On January 10th, 1999, to Linda and Ballo, a son, Luke David, a brother for Sophie and Poppy.

PRICE - On 5th January, 1999, to Katie (nee Childs) and Simon, a son, Archie James Talbot.

ROHAN - Robert Zimmerman Bear, a brother to Emily and Charlotte and a son to Margaret and Ian, born January 1st.

SAMUELS - On January 5th, 1999, to Alison (nee Evans) and Robert, a daughter, Anna Maria.

SCHAFER - On January 11th, 1999, to Rachel (nee Frost) and Guido, a son, Jakob Louis, a brother for Claire.

BIRTHS

THOMAS - On December 21st, 1998, to the Portland Hospital, to Fiona (nee Smith) and Simon, a daughter, Elizabeth Francesca, a sister for Freddie.

WALKER - On Wednesday 10th January, to Joanna (nee Truogold) and Graeme, a son, Edward.

WHITE - On 8th January, to Serena (nee Wallis) and Simon, a son, Freddie Harold Edward.

ADAMS - John Trevor Kirby on January 11th 1999, to Mary (nee Adams), a son, John.

BARROTT - Peter Mallett, MC and Bar, TD, suddenly on January 10th 1999 aged 78. Husband of Joan, father of Charles, David (deceased) and Michael. Funeral Service at St Mary's Church, Huddersfield on Friday 15th January at 10.30 am. Family flowers only. Donations if desired to Royal Air Charity, 100, Broad Street, W1P 9JL. Bereavement, Woolwich, London SE18 4BT.

BEILEY - Karen, Lady, died peacefully on Sunday evening 10th January 1999. She was 94. Buried at St. George's Church, London SW18 4BT. Family flowers only. Donations if desired to the Alzheimer's Disease Society, 100, Broad Street, W1P 9JL. Bereavement, Woolwich, London SE18 4BT.

BELFORD - On Saturday 9th January, Dr. Helen Cathleen Belford, aged 50. Wife of John, mother of the late Marie Curie Hospital, Huddersfield, and a daughter of the late Mrs. Belford. Funeral Service at St. Mary's Church, Huddersfield on Friday 15th January at 10.30 am. Family flowers only. Donations if desired to the Alzheimer's Disease Society, 100, Broad Street, W1P 9JL. Bereavement, Woolwich, London SE18 4BT.

BLAIR - At Strachan House, Edinburgh, on 10th January 1999, Sir Alexander Blair, aged 90. Devoted husband of the late Catherine Orr and much respected father and grandfather of Benjamin and Hannah. Funeral Service at Strachan House, Edinburgh, on Monday 18th January at 1.30pm. Family flowers only. Donations to Dr. Baird's Fund, 100, Broad Street, W1P 9JL. Bereavement, Woolwich, London SE18 4BT.

BREWER - Margaret Mary, died peacefully on 10th January 1999, aged 89. Devoted mother and grandmother. Funeral Service at Holy Trinity Church, Huddersfield, on Monday 18th January at 1.30pm. Family flowers only. Donations if desired to the Alzheimer's Disease Society, 100, Broad Street, W1P 9JL. Bereavement, Woolwich, London SE18 4BT.

BROWN - Stephen Lloyd, died peacefully on 10th January 1999, aged 49. Devoted son of Gwyn and the late Dr. Brown. Funeral Service at St. Lawrence's Church, Huddersfield, on Thursday 14th January at 1.30pm. Family flowers only. Donations if desired to the Alzheimer's Disease Society, 100, Broad Street, W1P 9JL. Bereavement, Woolwich, London SE18 4BT.

BROWN - David passed away on January 8th 1999 aged 82 years. Beloved husband of Janet, father of Jane, Andrew, Simon, Richard and Paul. Private funeral service to be held at St. Wilfrid's Church, Huddersfield, on Saturday 23rd January at 1.30pm. Family flowers only. Donations if desired to the Alzheimer's Disease Society, 100, Broad Street, W1P 9JL. Bereavement, Woolwich, London SE18 4BT.

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DEATHS

BLAIR - At Strachan House, Edinburgh, on 10th January 1999, Sir Alexander Blair, aged 90. Devoted husband of the late Catherine Orr and much respected father and grandfather of Benjamin and Hannah. Funeral Service at Strachan House, Edinburgh, on Monday 18th January at 1.30pm. Family flowers only. Donations to Dr. Baird's Fund, 100, Broad Street, W1P 9JL. Bereavement, Woolwich, London SE18 4BT.

BREWER - Margaret Mary, died peacefully on 10th January 1999, aged 89. Devoted mother and grandmother. Funeral Service at Holy Trinity Church, Huddersfield, on Monday 18th January at 1.30pm. Family flowers only. Donations if desired to the Alzheimer's Disease Society, 100, Broad Street, W1P 9JL. Bereavement, Woolwich, London SE18 4BT.

BROWN - Stephen Lloyd, died peacefully on 10th January 1999, aged 49. Devoted son of Gwyn and the late Dr. Brown. Funeral Service at St. Lawrence's Church, Huddersfield, on Thursday 14th January at 1.30pm. Family flowers only. Donations if desired to the Alzheimer's Disease Society, 100, Broad Street, W1P 9JL. Bereavement, Woolwich, London SE18 4BT.

BROWN - David passed away on January 8th 1999 aged 82 years. Beloved husband of Janet, father of Jane, Andrew, Simon, Richard and Paul. Private funeral service to be held at St. Wilfrid's Church, Huddersfield, on Saturday 23rd January at 1.30pm. Family flowers only. Donations if desired to the Alzheimer's Disease Society, 100, Broad Street, W1P 9JL. Bereavement, Woolwich, London SE18 4BT.

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THE TIMES

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Janet Bush says it
is time to tear up
Maastricht
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became the pride
of New York
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Michael Jordan
calls time on
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BUSINESS EDITOR Patience Wheatcroft

WEDNESDAY JANUARY 13 1999

Domecq's warning wipes off £850m

BY DOMINIC WALSH

ALLIED DOMECQ, the Beebeater and Firkin pub group, saw more than £850 million wiped from its stock market value yesterday after it issued a stark picture of trading in its pub division.

Its shares, which have performed strongly recently, closed 81½p lower at 510p, cutting its market capitalisation from £6.2 billion to less than £5.4 billion. Earlier in the day, they hit a low of 50½p, equivalent to a drop of almost £1 billion.

The setback will increase pressure on the Allied board to find ways to restore shareholder value, after the failure of talks about an alliance with Seagram, its Canadian rival.

Analysts reacted by cutting 1999 profit forecasts by an average of about 3 per cent. They are now expecting pre-tax profits of about £600 million in the year to September compared with £615 million last year.

The culprit was pubs, where like-for-like sales are 2.5 per cent lower in the year to date.

At yesterday's annual meeting, Sir Christopher Hogg, the chairman, told shareholders: "The impact of eroding consumer confidence, first evident last summer, has intensified, particularly over the Christmas period."

Company sources indicated that while food sales in its Big Steak pubs had continued to rise, wet sales across its estate had declined dramatically. "Quite simply, people are not going into our pubs in such great numbers and when they do they're spending less. But it's not just Allied, it's an industry-wide problem."

However, some analysts reacted angrily, with one saying: "This is like the Allied of the bad old days. While some of this is due to market conditions, you have to question how

management has responded to the problems."

Another added: "Instead of just saying that first-half profits would be lower and hoping for a hot summer to catch up, they admitted the full year would be down. Things must be bloody awful."

The news overshadowed strong spirits sales in the US and Europe and the £519 million sale last week of Cantrell & Cochrane, the Irish drinks distributor, which is expected to allow Allied to return up to £600 million to shareholders.

The nosedive in Allied's shares — which had rallied from 389½p since October — was all the more stark given the group's remarks on consolidation. Despite recent comments from Seagram, its Canadian rival, that appeared to rule out a spirits merger with Allied, Sir Christopher hinted that a deal could still be possible.

He said: "It remains to be seen how Seagram will address its wine and spirits business in the future. I cannot speculate on any timing, but if there is a possible opportunity we would look at it again."

Allied did not suffer alone yesterday, dragging down other companies in the sector, with Bass diving 74½p to 805p and Whitbread off 10½p to 767½p ahead of today's scheduled trading update.

Shares in Old English Pub Company dropped 48p to 262½p after it said that December's like-for-like sales declined by 2.9 per cent, partly because of the flu epidemic. However, Barry Warwick, chief executive, branded the drop as an over-reaction, adding: "The overall prospects for the future remain very bright."

Commentary, page 25



Blunt words: Charlene Barshefsky said Japan is failing to act responsibly

US facing trade war with Japan and Europe

BY CARL MORTSHED AND ALASDAIR MURRAY

AMERICA faces a trade war on two fronts because of growing tension over steel imports from Japan and the failure yesterday to avert a collision with Europe over bananas.

Charlene Barshefsky, the US trade representative, yesterday gave warning that the US would take legal action if Japan failed to stem the tide of cheap steel entering the US. Ms Barshefsky bluntly accused the Japanese of failing to act responsibly in reviving their economy and said: "It is no secret that trade tensions between the United States and Japan are increasing quite dramatically."

American anger with Japan will be further aggravated by signs that the Bank of Japan was intervening in the currency markets, buying dollars in an effort to stop the rise of the yen. The dollar rose from ¥108 to ¥112 as the Bank of Japan attempted to prevent a strengthening yen from undermining Japan's efforts to export its way out of recession.

The warning given by Ms Barshefsky to Kaoru Yosano, Japan's Trade Minister, also coincided with a threat of sanctions against Europe. Rita Hayes, the US envoy to the World Trade Organisation, said the US would apply for authorisation to impose sanctions against European imports worth some \$568 million (£350 million).

The US will make its request to the WTO on January 27 despite agreement at the trade organisation to set up a dispute resolution panel, requested by Ecuador. The Latin American country was one of the original complainants in the six-year dispute over EU

quotas favouring Caribbean bananas.

Under WTO rules, the request for sanctions is unlikely to fail because a refusal must be unanimous and the US takes part in the decision. The US has already published a list of European goods it will target, which include more than £80 million of UK exports, including cashmere sweaters, potentially threatening the struggling Scottish knitwear industry with the loss of some 900 jobs.

WTO experts believe that the US determination in pursuing sanctions over the bananas is an attempt to test Europe's commitment to the WTO rules. One said: "They are trying to prevent the EU from engaging in a continuous loop of litigation."

A US trade spokesman pointed to the outstanding dispute over the European ban on beef hormones. "The deadline for European compliance is on May 13." Failure to comply is likely to lead to more US threats of sanctions.

The steel row could also cause Brussels and Washington to cross swords because each accuses the other of failing to play its part in absorbing a flood of Asian exports. European steelmakers are already launching anti-dumping complaints about Asian producers.

The Bank of Japan would not confirm its intervention yesterday but it would be the first by financial authorities since Japan and the US sold dollars to support the yen last June. The last known dollar-buying intervention by the Bank of Japan was in February 1996.

Commentary, page 25

BUSINESS TODAY

STOCK MARKET	
FTSE 100	6033.6 (-51.4)
Yield	2.71%
FTSE All Share	2743.33 (-19.40)
Nikkei	13360.97 (-7.51)
New York	8537.75 (-82.13)
Dow Jones	1249.81 (-14.07)
S&P Composite	1249.81 (-14.07)
BOND	
3% RATE	
Federal Funds	5% (5%)
Long bond	100% (66%)
Yield	5.25% (5.31%)
LONDON MONEY	
3-month interbank	5% (5%)
Libor long	118.75 (119.24)
Future (Mar)	
STERLING	
New York	1.6307* (1.6286)
London	1.6305 (1.6401)
Frankfurt	1.4126 (1.4220)
Paris	2.2678 (2.2922)
Yen	182.29 (179.30)
£ Index	98.6 (99.0)
USD \$ DOLLAR	
London	1.1551* (1.1502)
SF	1.3885* (1.4005)
Yen	112.00* (108.62)
£ Index	165.8 (163.0)
Tokyo close Yen 112.40	
NORTH SEA OIL	
Brent 15-day (Mar)	\$11.60 (\$11.95)
Oil	
London close	\$288.75 (\$292.70)
Exchange rates	Page 24
* denotes midday trading prices	

Wembley signs stadium deal

WEMBLEY has signed the £103 million deal to sell its famous stadium to a subsidiary of the Football Association, so ending nearly nine months of speculation about its future (Jason Nisbet writes).

The FA will now set about trying to raise £200 million to fund the redevelopment of the stadium. The sale was agreed in April, but it has been held up because three non-executive directors objected. They approached Enric, the investment company, which said it is prepared to make a £230 million bid for Wembley.

Classic contest, page 27

Revenue approves 300 firms to sell Isa

BY CAROLINE MERRELL

MORE than 300 companies have been cleared to offer the individual savings account (Isa), despite the financial services industry's initial misgivings about the viability of the scheme.

The Inland Revenue revealed yesterday that 300 companies had received authorisation to offer Isas, the Government's replacement for personal equity plans (Peps) and tax- exempt special savings accounts (Sassas).

The high level of companies gaining authorisation follows more than a year of controversy about the accounts, which were unveiled at the end of 1997 by Geoffrey Robinson, the former Paymaster General. Companies claimed that the rules, and in particular a government-designed benchmark — the Cat standard — made the Isa economically unviable.

Patricia Hewitt, Economic Secretary to the Treasury, said: "This is good news. It means that savers will be able to choose from a very wide range of Isa providers and products when the Isa is launched on April 6."

Marks & Spencer, J Sainsbury and Tesco were among those most critical of the Government's schemes. All three are now gearing up for the launch. M&S said yesterday that it was planning a big advertising campaign for its Isa. However, the supermarket will not be offering the Isa at the checkout as originally envisaged by the Government.

Cooklin leaves Signet to take helm at Thorn

BY SARAH CUNNINGHAM, RETAIL CORRESPONDENT

LAURENCE COOKLIN, the man who took over the running of Burton Group after the departure of Sir Ralph Halpern, is leaving Signet, where he has been in charge of the Ernest Jones and H Samuel businesses for the past six years, to take the helm at Thorn.

Thorn, which owns the Radio Rentals business, was bought by Nomura last year after a dismal period as an independent company after its merger from EMI.

James McAdam, chairman of Signet, will take day-to-day control of the group's British businesses while the company looks for a replacement UK chief executive. Signet, which is also listed on Nasdaq, now has most of its operations in the US and said that a strong performance there should mean that pre-tax profits for the year to January 30 will be ahead of expectations.

The group said yesterday

that like-for-like sales at Ernest Jones were up 1.1 per cent in the three weeks to Christmas Eve. At H Samuel they fell 2.4 per cent. In the US, where it trades as Jared and Sterling, like-for-like sales rose 10.6 per cent in the same period. Signet shares rose 34p to 394p.

Cooklin on the move

AXA puts in offer for GRE

BY MARIANNE CURPHEY, INSURANCE CORRESPONDENT

GUARDIAN Royal Exchange (GRE), the embattled composite insurer, has received an informal approach from AXA, the French insurer, valuing the company at about 360p a share.

AXA, which owns Sun Life in the UK, has not tabled the offer formally. The board of GRE, led by John Robins, chief executive, is understood to have asked AXA to raise the offer. GRE is seeking closer to 500p a share.

Shares in GRE, which has a market capitalisation of almost £3 billion, closed 1p higher at 337p yesterday after four million shares changed hands. The insurer said last month it was considering a number of options for its future.

It has also emerged that Peter Owen, chief executive of PPP, has been appointed his apparent to Mr Robins, who is not expected to continue at GRE in the long term.

GRE declined to comment on whether the company had received a bid.

A Christmas cracker for Kingfisher

BY SARAH CUNNINGHAM

KINGFISHER, the retail group, yesterday declared the high street to have been the winner at Christmas. Its high street chains, Woolworths and Superdrug, outperformed Comet and B&Q, which are mainly in out-of-town retail parks.

In the nine weeks to January 2, group like-for-like sales grew by 2.2 per cent. Woolworths and Superdrug, which are heavily dependent on Christmas sales, had like-for-like growth of 5.2 per cent and 5 per cent, respectively.

B&Q, the DIY business, and Comet, the electricals superstore chain, fared less well. B&Q saw like-for-like sales rise 0.6 per cent, while Comet sales were down 0.9 per cent. Darty, the French electricals business, had like-for-like sales growth of 2 per cent.

Total sales for the group, which has just completed the merger of B&Q with its French equivalent, Castorama, were

£1.98 billion, a 23 per cent rise from £1.61 billion. This was after growth from acquisitions and new stores as well as like-for-like growth.

Sir Geoffrey Mulcahy, chief executive, said: "Customers were careful with their money in the run-up to Christmas, but overall we are pleased with the group's performance, which leaves us well placed to meet our targets for the year."

Matalan, another retailer emphasising value for money, yesterday reported strong Christmas trading. In the five weeks to January 2, like-for-like sales rose by 11.4 per cent. Matalan said that annual pre-tax profits, to be announced in March, will be not less than £23 million, which is well above current City forecasts.

Kingfisher's shares fell 25p to 624½p yesterday. Matalan's rose 17p to 369½p.

Tempus, page 26

Incorrect tax bills sent to 800,000

BY ANNE ASHWORTH

THE Inland Revenue has sent out incorrect income tax bills to 800,000 self-employed people.

The errors on self-assessment statements of account led the unfortunate recipients to believe that they had to pay twice as much as they had been expecting.

Accountants have been inundated with calls from anxious clients fearing

that they might not be able to meet these liabilities. The self-assessment payment deadline is January 31.

Chris Humphrey, a tax consultant from Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, called the blunder a "scandal". One of his clients who had anticipated a bill of about £1,200 had received a statement giving a figure of £2,400.

Many of the self-employed are already reeling from the change to the payment system under self-assessment.

For the first time they are being taxed on current year earnings, rather than the previous year's as under the old system. On January 31, thousands will be paying not only the remaining tax for 1997-98 but also the first instalment of tax owing for 1998-99.

Admitting its mistake yesterday, the Revenue explained that the wrong figures appeared on statements sent to those self-employed who were due to make payments on account for the

1998-99 tax year. These payments are due on January 31 and July 31. The second payment has inadvertently been included and is shown without a date.

The Revenue promised that it would be writing to taxpayers and their advisers to clarify the situation. Anyone still unable to calculate what amount to pay should contact their local tax office or the self-assessment helpline (0645 000444).

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Vickers and Giat in talks

Vickers, the engineering group, has confirmed it is in talks with Giat Industries, a French defence group, aimed at forming a joint venture company for supplying land defence equipment. The memorandum of intent signed yesterday between the two companies is a further step in the consolidation of the European land defence industry.

The alliance will initially cover functions such as sales and research, and will not include pooling manufacturing facilities.

The joint venture would not cover Vickers's Challenger 2 tank and Giat's Leclerc tank, which are in direct competition.

Amec trading holds up

Amec, the engineering and construction group, yesterday sought to reassure the City that its trading was holding up and order books were steady. It told the market that trading was in line with expectations — despite "general uncertainties" in the UK economy — ahead of the publication of its results on March 11.

Peter Mason, chief executive, told analysts that prospects had been brightened by its £80 million contract for a section of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link, its preferred bidder status for the £70 million West Anglia and North Thames rail infrastructure maintenance contract and a £75 million order for Southern Water.

Cortecs closure

Cortecs, the troubled drug development company, is making 75 staff redundant and closing its Isleworth, west London, head office. Shares in Cortecs rose 40 per cent to 26p yesterday. More than 9.2 million shares were traded, reflecting interest sparked by Nomura International's acquisition of a stake of more than 6 per cent.

EXCHANGE RATES

Bank	Bank	Bank
Australia \$	1.56	2.47
Austria Sch	13.76	13.84
Belgium F	60.34	56.98
Canada C\$	0.68	0.70
Cyprus Cyp	0.0065	0.7950
Denmark Kr	11.13	10.24
East	5.76	5.15
Finland Mk	8.97	8.22
France F	9.16	8.98
Germany DM	2.93	2.93
Greece Dr	405	448
Hong Kong \$	13.47	12.27
India Rupee	126	106
Indonesia Rp	1,173	1,083
Ireland P	5.98	6.32
Israel Sh	2817	2980
Italy Lit	198.16	189.63
Japan Yen	0.658	0.691
Malaysia M	5.313	3.018
Malta Lm	3.14	2.90
New Zealand \$	12.80	11.88
Norway Kr	206.81	274.58
Portugal Esc	10.47	9.51
S Africa Rd	247.22	228.44
Spain Pta	13.70	12.50
Sweden Kr	2.429	2.211
Switzerland F	5.291	5.069
Taiwan N	1.738	1.595
USA \$		

Rates for small denomination banknotes only as supplied by Barclays Bank. Different rates apply to travellers' cheques. Rates as at close of trading yesterday.

Manufacturing woes raise hopes of European rate cut

By ALASDAIR MURRAY AND ADAM SAGE

GERMANY suffered an unexpectedly sharp contraction in industrial output in November while French inflation slipped to a 44-year low last year, raising hopes of an early cut in European interest rates.

The weak manufacturing outlook was further backed up by a separate report showing manufacturing activity across the euro zone declining for the third consecutive month in December.

However, European consumer confidence rose to a ten-year

high, providing one bright spot amid a string of otherwise gloomy data.

Germany, Europe's largest economy, recorded a 2.3 per cent fall in industrial output, about three times more than the market expected. The manufacturing element of the data showed an even sharper fall, registering a decline of 2.4 per cent. Economists said the figures were so weak that the German economy as a whole is likely to show a contraction across the fourth quarter.

The separate euro zone purchasing managers index stood at 46.9 in December, down

from 47.2 in November and pointing to a further decline in activity. Inflation pressures remained almost non-existent, with the cost of raw materials and semi-manufactured goods again slipping.

Dr Frank Schröder, German economist at HSBC Trinkaus, said: "Given the weakening industrial picture throughout the euro zone, we expect the European Central Bank to cut the repo rate by a quarter point in February."

Analysis also turned up the pressure on the ECB for an interest rate cut by pointing to evidence that other measures of

inflation remain subdued across Europe.

Consumer inflation in France, with prices rising at an annual rate of just 0.3 per cent, sparked fears of a deflationary spiral in the heart of the euro zone.

The French Government yesterday announced the virtual price stability in triumphant tones, pointing out that with growth of 3.1 per cent last year, the spending power of French households had improved considerably.

Statisticians said the last time France had an inflation lower than last year's was in 1953,

when prices slumped by 2.3 per cent, provoking a period of social and political instability. Deflation at the wholesale level also gathered pace in Spain, with prices falling 2.1 per cent in the year to November after a 1.8 per cent decline the month before.

However, Eurostat, the European Commission's statistical office, said euro zone consumer confidence rose to its highest level since early 1990. Consumers are showing a positive attitude towards large purchases and a more optimistic approach to the general economic situation.

Morgan tops UK mergers league table

By RICHARD MILES, BANKING CORRESPONDENT

MORGAN Stanley Dean Witter has become the first American investment bank to top the UK mergers and acquisitions table after advising on deals worth more than £19 billion in 1998.

Schroders came a close second with 28 transactions valued at £18.3 billion, while Lazards, last year's winner, slipped to fourth behind Goldman Sachs, the Wall Street partnership that shelved its own flotation last autumn.

David Rothnie, editor of *Acquisitions Monthly*, the magazine that compiles the league tables, said it had been a record year for M&A activity. The total value of UK public deals hit £90 billion, smashing the previous record of £67.7 billion in 1995.

He said: "The most remarkable aspect of 1998 was the sheer volume of activity, coming as it did in a year of economic turbulence, with banks adopting a cautious approach to funding buyouts and IPOs during the third quarter. Nevertheless, a strong final quarter meant UK M&A activity broke all records."

The ascendancy of Morgan Stanley, said Mr Rothnie, demonstrated that some US banks now have an established reputation for providing quality advice on UK public transactions. During the year, the bank worked on two multibillion-pound deals for The Energy Group, as well as GA's merger with Commercial Union.

Schroders topped the league by number of transactions, which included the pitched battle between Argos and Great Universal Stores, and the acquisition of Allied Colloids by white knight Ciba Specialty Chemicals. Other deals included the GA/UC merger and Nomura's purchase of Thorn.

Most improved bank was Credit Suisse First Boston, a new entry at number six, after its £100 million acquisition of BZW's equities and corporate advisory businesses at the end of 1997. Barings, winner in both 1996 and 1995, continues to slide down the league table, slipping two positions to fifteenth.



Ellis & Everard, the chemicals distributor, where Peter Wood, above, is chief executive, saw pre-tax profits in the half year

to October 31 improve 3 per cent to £17 million. The interim dividend rises 3 per cent to 3.6p a share. *Times*, page 26

Trinity and Mirror proposal deadlocked

By RAYMOND SNOODY, MEDIA EDITOR

FINANCIAL advisers were yesterday unable to break the deadlock in merger talks between Mirror Group and Trinity, the UK's largest regional newspaper company.

Trinity, whose titles include the *Daily Post* in Liverpool and the *Belfast Telegraph*, withdrew on Sunday and said that it has no intention of making the first move. The Mirror board also said that it does not intend to approach Trinity. It is believed that there were no contacts between the two groups, yesterday, formal or otherwise.

Senior Mirror executives met yesterday with Phillips & Drew Fund Management (PDFM), which holds a 22 per cent stake in the company.

PDFM, which is enthusiastic about the strategic potential of a Trinity-Mirror merger, wanted to hold a "post mortem" and inquire whether a deal was still possible. But for the moment at least the chances seem less likely. Mirror shares rose 3p to 16p. Trinity rose 10p to 43p. Any deal would trigger a Monopolies and Mergers Commission investigation which could last up to eight months.

First Leisure in talks

By DOMINIC WALSH

FIRST LEISURE yesterday admitted that it was discussing "a number of strategic alternatives" with third parties, sparking a fresh round of takeover speculation in the leisure sector.

There have been suggestions that Luminar, the nightclub and theme bar operator, or even Rank Group might be eyeing First Leisure. However, analysts were last night strongly tipping Luminar to make a move on Northern Leisure, the rival nightclub group.

First Leisure, which was forced to make a statement by the Takeover Panel after a sharp rise in its share price on Monday, said its talks were "at a very

exploratory stage", adding: "It is therefore too soon to predict whether they will result in any agreement at all."

Observers believe Michael Grade, chief executive, is seeking a deal in a bid to revive the group's ailing share price. Over the summer it slumped from 436p to 160p. Its rise this week to 224p is largely based on hopes of a bid.

But observers believe the tone of yesterday's statement indicates that a takeover, of or by, First Leisure is unlikely. One said: "What you might see is some sort of strategic alliance or joint venture with the likes of Vardon on the health and fitness side."

Gold price tarnished

By CARL MORTSHED, INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS EDITOR

THE gold market is heading for a year of stagnation after suffering the lowest average annual price in two decades. A combination of weak demand, sales from central banks and falling costs of production has persuaded Gold Field Mineral Services (GFMS), the commodity researchers, that the gold price will remain stuck in a range of between \$270 and \$310 per ounce.

GFMS said yesterday that the average gold price for 1998 was \$294 per ounce, the lowest for 20 years. Paul Walker, spokesman for GFMS, said that gold was becoming commoditised

and losing its status as a hedge against inflation, as investors sought greater security in dollars and US government bonds. According to GFMS, currency weakness resulted in 1,000 tonnes of gold flowing into the market from Indonesia, Korea and Thailand, as people turned their jewellery into cash.

The average cash cost worldwide of producing an ounce of gold fell by \$50 to less than \$200 from the third quarter in 1997 to that of 1998. "It's a phenomenal fall; most mines will continue producing as long as they can cover their operating costs," Mr Walker said.

Bullough aims to make acquisitions

BULLOUGH, the engineering, heating and office furniture company, plans to make several acquisitions to strengthen its specialist engineering businesses in the face of "worsening market conditions". The company, which last year sold three of its refrigeration businesses for £16 million, said that it would also use the cash raised from its disposal programme to increase organic investment and to repurchase shares.

The company was reporting a rise in profits from its continuing operations in the year to October 31 to £19.3 million, from £19.1 million, on turnover up 11 per cent to £203 million (£184 million). Pre-tax profits before exceptional fell to £18.3 million (£19.0 million). An unchanged 4.5p final dividend keeps the total at 5.8p. Gordon Bond, chief executive, said: "The current year will be a difficult one if current economic conditions are anything to go by, and we are responding accordingly. We are simply playing to our strengths."

Savills raises earnings

SAVILLS, the property agency, reported a 28 per cent rise in half-year pre-tax earnings to £5.2 million. Although the results were in line with expectations, the company's shares slipped 6p to 177p. A collapse in the share price in the summer is believed to have prompted First Pacific Davies, a shareholder, to line up a takeover bid. FDP, however, cannot acquire more of the stock until April because of a standstill clause in a partnership agreement. The interim dividend rises 40 per cent to 1.75p. *Times*, page 26

Rentokil spends £37m

RENTOKIL INITIAL, the business services company, yesterday announced eight acquisitions for a total of £37 million. The purchases include two textile services businesses, Adrett in Germany and BTMF in France, and the Initial Staffing franchise in Cincinnati in the US. Five security businesses have also been acquired: Crime Halt Security Systems, Wolsey Concrete Alarm Systems and Capstan, all in the UK; Alert Security Systems in The Netherlands; and Minion Manned Guarding in Alberta, Canada.

WYKO warning

WYKO, the engineering group, reported increased profits yesterday but gave a warning that "demand has become more erratic". The group lifted pre-tax profits to £6.2 million for the half year to October 31, from £5.9 million last time. Philip White, chairman, said: "If the pre-Christmas level of demand does continue into the new year, profits in the second half will be adversely affected and are then unlikely to match the first half performance." Earnings per share were 6.41p (6.1p) and an interim dividend of 1.8p (1.55p) was declared.

Dudley Jenkins rises

SHARES in Dudley Jenkins, the direct mail supplies group, rose nearly 14 per cent after the company announced it was at an "advanced stage" of takeover talks. The company said that any offer would be at 50p per share, a premium of 18 per cent to Monday's closing price of 42p. In July, the group reported full-year pre-tax profits of £3.63 million (£2.65 million) on turnover of £23.13 million. Tylan Bahceli, chairman, views 1999 with "cautious optimism". The shares, which have risen from a low of 31p in October, yesterday closed up 67p at 50p.

Bespak shares fall

SHARES of Bespak fell 68p to 917p yesterday after the medical devices manufacturer said that the decline in sales of valves for its CFC inhalers would be "greater than originally anticipated" and would offset growth in other areas. Inhaler valves provide about 45 per cent of group sales worldwide. The warning came as Bespak announced record first-half profits of £7 million for the six months to October 30, up from £6.6 million, on sales of £41.9 million (£42.3 million). Earnings per share were 20.3p (18.9p) and the interim dividend is 5.6p (5.1p).

Aggregate optimism

AGGREGATE INDUSTRIES, the quarrying group that recently pulled out of a £1.8 billion merger with Tarmac, the construction group, yesterday said trading had been rock-solid to the end of last year. In a trading update, AI said that it had produced savings of £13 million a year since its formation as a result of a merger between Barlton and Camas in 1997. Most of the improved results came from the US, with strong demand reported in all markets. Favourable weather in the US extended AI's working season. AI shares remained at 69p.

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An Enterprise worth exploring



COMMENTARY
by our City Editor

If there is any rival out there who believes that BTR and Siebe should not be joined together, he is keeping his peace until the very last moment. Despite investor hopes that more generous souls than Lord Marshall and Allan Yurko might decide to ride to Ian Strachan's rescue, the weeks have ticked by without a sign of a company prepared to put a higher value on BTR than Mr Strachan himself has done. So today shareholders will almost certainly vote through the deal, although in a spirit more of resignation than enthusiasm.

Yet the challenge that those two companies faced in marketing their proposed marriage are as nothing compared with the problems that lie ahead for Lasmo and Enterprise Oil. If news of their flirtings has met with a sceptical response, it is hardly surprising, since their previous encounter was in a bid which fully lived up to its designation as "hostile".

Times, and the oil price, change and so, force majeure, do relationships. But the two companies might have had a better chance of convincing the market of the merits of a get-together had the idea not leaked extremely prematurely. The ensuing speculation as to who would constitute the top team in the combined operation was hardly guaranteed to foster a new spirit of friendliness between the organisations.

Yet the potential value in putting the two companies together

does merit giving them the chance to explore the idea in some depth. They could prove to be surprisingly compatible.

Both companies are already embarked on cost-cutting exercises, necessarily more drastic at Lasmo than at Enterprise, so there will be only limited scope to cut still further after a merger. A decision to exit completely, rather than merely scale back, Enterprise's presence in lavish Trafalgar Square offices might, however, be judged a sensitive move.

There could be more positive aspects, however, to rolling the two exploration and production companies into one. With Lasmo facing some hefty write-offs, blamed on investments made before the sensible Joe Darby took over the reins, there are fears that selling some assets into a desperately mean marketplace. As part of a financially stronger enterprise, painful forced sales could be avoided. And together the companies might find they could offer investors a portfolio with a more reassuring balance of geographic and financial risks and future profit prospects than either can alone.

If those arguments do prove

convincing to the companies themselves, they will face the tricky question of who will run the show. More immediately appealing link-ups have foundered on a few people's job prospects. The suave Rudolph Agnew is big enough to happily move onto the next challenge, allowing Sir Graham Hearn to chair the pairing. But neither Pierre Jungels nor Joe Darby deserve to be cast in the Ian Strachan role.

Charlene may yet drive us bananas

How deeply is the United States committed to free trade? Absolutely, every blue-blooded American would say. Let's hope so. The open trading system depends on that American commitment, in the face of age-old protectionist tendencies in continental Europe. Over the next two years, however, that commitment will face a

severe test. It will certainly be the toughest since the high-dollar era of the mid-1980s, possibly the most stressful since the postwar Bretton Woods accord.

The only reason the world economy has not followed Japan, Russia and the Asian "tigers" into recession is that American consumers are holding it up. They are still spending like there is a tomorrow that they can rely on.

Asia is not importing much. Countries tend not to if, as in Indonesia, your currency remains only a quarter of its exchange value of 18 months ago or if, as in Japan, your economy has scarcely grown in a decade. Even Brazil is undergoing a medicinal squeeze. No wonder the German capital goods industry is in trouble.

Not surprisingly, the US trade deficit is growing by leaps and bounds. It has to be the rest of the world economy is to recover before the US sees the end of the burden. Its trade gap will reach ever higher records as Asia relies on ex-

ported growth to get its economies moving again. The US and the European Union may have instructed the rest to rely on internal recovery, but no one ever thought they could.

American industry will still complain ever more bitterly as it sees exports dry up and imports eat into existing markets as well as feeding increases in US domestic demand and those complaints will carry weight with a weakened President. Next year, looking after American industry will be the stuff of campaigns to elect a new President.

How depressing, then, that the US should be stepping the rhetoric up to fever pitch already. In Tokyo yesterday, US Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky threatened Japan with "punitive sanctions" unless it took action over steel exports and much else. In Geneva, US trade ambassador Rita Hayes said the US would go ahead with sanctions forcing 100 per cent tariffs on

\$500 million of imports from the EU in the endless banana dispute, where US policy is guided by the former United Fruit.

This courtroom hype is for domestic ears. It is also the sort of diplomacy that ends in war. Right now, a trade war is not what the world economy needs.

Two halves please, barman

Can it be that they do not go near such places themselves? Analysts appear to have been more than a little surprised to hear of the dismal sales performance at Allied Domecq pubs, hence they had not seen yesterday's profits warning coming. Yet back in October, Allied was sounding anything but optimistic about the prospects for the business, cutting back investment plans and warning of the effects of increased competition. What has been happening in the real economy, rather than the stock market, since then may have encouraged the man in the street to drown his sorrows, but he may have opted to do so more cheaply at home than in his local.

Allied increasingly looks like a

business of two halves, one potentially swift and one a laggard. Seeing approaching £1 billion wiped off their investment can only encourage investors to push harder for the demerger that they have long been hoping Sir Christopher Hogg would instigate. He has recently seemed to be warming to the idea.

Allied's international drinks business has performed remarkably well, considering the state of world markets. That the long discussed possibility of a close link with Seagram has been publicly shelved by the Canadians is not the disaster that it might have seemed a couple of years ago. Allied also has a stable of strong retail brands. The pub trade still has its aficionados. Allied should ask them in for a friendly drink immediately.

Style and substance

MONSIEUR Bernard Arnault's approach to the business game combines the tactics of a chess player with the occasional tantrums of the tennis court. His former boardroom colleagues at Guinness speak fondly of his contribution to Anglo-French relations, which at one stage threatened to block the merger with Grand Metropolitan to create Diageo. Even they would have to admire the way in which he is now tying both Gucci and Prada more tightly into his DFS shopping empire: a truly stylish deal.

JJB issues profits warning

JJB SPORTS, the sports retailer, yesterday issued a profits warning after disastrous Christmas trading by Sports Division, the business it bought last year (Sarah Cunningham writes).

JJB, whose shares fell 15 per cent to 249p in response, is calling a shareholders' meeting next month to seek consent to buy back its shares. It will buy up to 5 per cent this year if the price stays low.

In the seven weeks to January 9, Sports Division's like-for-like sales, stripping out new stores, fell 16 per cent. For the 49 weeks to that date, they fell 11 per cent. Stores trading as JJB fared far better, managing a like-for-like sales increase of 7.4 per cent over the Christmas weeks, and a 0.3 per cent increase over the 49 weeks.

Arjo gets set for three-way split

By CARL MORTIMER, INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS EDITOR

ARJO Wiggins Appleton, the Anglo-French paper business, has effectively put a "for sale" sign on itself and removed its chief executive after announcing plans to repackage its sprawling empire into three independent divisions.

Ken Minton, Arjo's chairman, said that Philippe Beylier would leave the group because a chief executive would not be needed under the new structure.

Mr Minton, who is taking on the role of executive chairman, said that Arjo would be left with three distinct businesses with little synergy between them: carbonless and thermal paper, fine, specialty and coated paper, and paper merchandising.

Mr Minton said that the plan was to develop the busi-

nesses separately to enhance shareholder value. He said: "I have no doubt that the sum of the parts can be demonstrated to be substantially greater than the whole."

He said that a sale, a demerger or a flotation were likely options, but he doubted that any of the businesses would be suitable for a management buyout. "We will look at the various options when it is right to do so," he said.

Shares in the paper group rose from 109p to 115p after news of the possible break-up. Mr Minton insisted that the result for 1998 would be in line with expectations and that there were no plans for large restructuring charges. He said: "There is no black hole. This is not advance notice of a cold-bath situation."

M Beylier will receive compensation of about £30,000 based on a two-year service contract.

Arjo has been a disastrous investment for its shareholders, having almost halved in value since the merger that formed the group in 1991, when it was worth £2 billion. Mr Minton confirmed that at least £1.5 billion had been invested in the business since then, but, even after yesterday's share price boost, the company had a market value of just under £1 billion.

Arjo has previously tried to shed its carbonless paper operation. One analyst said: "In this business, it may be difficult to turn off all the lights and go home."

Tempos, page 26

Sears to sell credit card firm

SEARS will today attempt to spike the guns of Philip Green, the entrepreneur laying siege to the troubled retailer, by announcing the sale of its credit card business (Sarah Cunningham writes).

The sale of Creation Financial Services—the announcement of which will accompany what is expected to be a poor Christmas trading statement—is expected to be for more than £120 million.

Analysts believe that Freemans, its catalogue business, has been trading particularly poorly.

Mr Green, who is believed to have lined up buyers for Creation and Freemans, will decide on his next move after seeing the Sears trading statement. His last conditional offer for Sears—before Christmas—was of 340p a share, but was rejected. Sears shares closed down 34p at 285p.

Arnault raises Gucci stake in deal with Prada

By FRASER NELSON

BERNARD ARNAULT, chairman of LVMH, has agreed a secret deal with Prada whereby his company will acquire the Italian fashion house's 9.5 per cent stake in Gucci (See Commentary, this page).

Prada has agreed to sell for an undisclosed amount believed to be about £200 million—20 per cent below market value. This gives LVMH a 14.4 per cent stake in Gucci.

In return M Arnault will sell Prada clothes through DFS, its Far East network of shopping arcades, on similar terms to those of LVMH's own labels, which include Christian Dior and Kenzo.

The deal leaves LVMH with greater control over both its Italian rivals, becoming one of Prada's largest distributors and Gucci's largest shareholder.

M Arnault now has ten days to decide whether to make a formal bid for Gucci. However, shares of both companies fell yesterday on the expectation that M Arnault will now lie low and enjoy the new flow of internal Gucci trading information.

Analysts believe that M Arnault sees Gucci and Prada as the salvation of DFS, a network of Far Eastern airport fashion arcades that he bought just before the economic crisis two years ago. M Arnault believes the economy is about to rebound, and that DFS commands most of the sites where Gucci and Prada would wish to expand.

LVMH generates 40 per cent of its sales from the Far East. Gucci generates 38 per cent and Prada about 35 per cent. Gucci is now valued at £2.6 billion.

Boost for HMV Media

HMV MEDIA, owner of Waterstone's bookshops and HMV music shops, looks to be heading for an early flotation (Sarah Cunningham writes).

The group, whose chairman is Tim Waterstone, envisaged a float within 18 to 36 months when it was formed in March 1998. Alan Giles, HMV chief executive, who ran Waterstone's when WH Smith owned it, said that a "heartening Christmas performance" had aided flotation prospects. He would not rule out a float before autumn. Comparable store sales rose 4.9 per cent over Christmas.

In the company's second quarter, to October 24, operating profit rose £10.5 million to £14.6 million. Finance charges of £23 million led to a first-half loss of £16.1 million.

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£500,000 - £999,999	6.10	4.88	5.94	4.75
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Now is the time to tear up Maastricht

The black force taking place in the European Commission is naturally embarrassing for Europe's political elites, coming as it does just a week after the launch of the single currency. However, they should move swiftly on from hand-wringing and see events in Brussels for what they are: the best possible thing to happen for Europe's future.

Europe is already saddled with two powerful, unelected, unaccountable institutions, and getting rid of one of them would be a bonus. The Commission has done its job of rubber stamping even the most outrageous fudges needed for single currency entrants to meet the Maastricht treaty. It should now be disbanded with all its power and policy making transferred to the national governments in the euro 11, giving them a bit more muscle to deal with Europe's other unelected, unaccountable institution: the European Central Bank.

Getting rid of the Commission would be an important first step in closing Europe's democratic deficit (empowering the European Parliament would be another). The second step, now that the euro is safely launched, is for euroland governments to tear up the Maastricht model of economic management which, as Charles Dumas of Lombard Street Research puts it, "dangerously Balkanised policy-making institutions".

Noting that the ECB's "excessive independence" was the price for persuading German voters to give up the mark, he writes: "This model of responsible, central bankers mopping up after naughty governments—quite apart from being undemocratic—treats governments as inflexible and may thus encourage them to be so."

Many of us have long expected a battle to end all battles eventually to be joined between the ECB and Europe's current politicians, largely elected on promises to end euro-sclerosis and, with it, mass unem-

ployment. Few of us expected the fight to be needed so soon.

What has changed is the perception of prospects for the euroland economies. Prospects had looked relatively bright in the months leading up to the euro's launch, but the latest news is ominous. We heard yesterday that German industrial output fell by 2.3 per cent in November, far larger than the 0.7 per cent fall analysts had expected. Industry orders fell by 1.5 per cent in November.

Analysts now believe that German GDP may actually have fallen in the fourth quarter (arguably weaker than Britain), suggesting that the official forecast of 2 per cent growth in 1999 is too optimistic and tending to back the DIW institute that last week cut its forecast for this year from 2.1 per cent to 1.4 per cent.

The news from Germany is the

most alarming in euroland, but things are not too bright elsewhere. A Reuters survey yesterday found that manufacturing activity in the 11 eurozone countries declined in December for the third month in a row. At the same time, inflation is low and falling.

The answer is clear: euroland interest rates are too high and they need to be cut soon. Yet the ECB has said that rates will remain at 3 per cent for the foreseeable future.

In addition, fiscal policy is far too tight for an environment which is close to being deflationary. Because of Maastricht and the Stability and Growth Pact, policy is geared towards balanced budgets, implying a tightening of euroland's structural deficit by 0.3 per cent both this year and next.

Despite the fact that monetary and fiscal policy are ridiculously tight, given clear signs of an economic slowdown in euroland, politicians have still not broken rank. Euroland's medium-term fiscal plans, released before February's Ecofin council meeting, showed a continuing commitment to reduce deficits further.

Even more worrying for Europe's prospects was the new year warning by Heiner Flassbeck, one of Europe's most prominent proponents of demand management, that slower growth should not be



an excuse for deficit spending. So much for the return of Keynesianism to Europe. (Britain stands as an honourable exception, aggressively cutting interest rates and loosening control of public spending to allow automatic stabilisers to work at exactly the right point in the cycle.)

We must presume that Herr Flassbeck was trying to act the fiscal penitent as the euro was launched, but it cannot be possible for the man who is, after all, the former chief economist of the DIW institute to go on advocating tight fiscal policies. If he is, Germany and others in euroland have zero hope of cutting unemployment and Europe has an even more serious deficit in political leadership than it does in democracy.

Given the world's need for a new growth locomotive, we must all hope that euroland's politicians

abandon the Stability and Growth Pact and frighten the ECB — by threatening a dramatic fiscal loosening — into giving its tacit approval and refrain from raising rates and so negate the helpful effects of higher spending.

It is the simplest good sense that slow growth and rising unemployment busts deficit limits even more surely than socialist tax and spend. Spain, on the back of a period of strong growth, is headed for a balanced budget with no need for any further fiscal restraint.

Europe's route map to prosperity is blindingly, idiotically obvious. With low inflation, a popular (with international investors) new currency and relatively low budget deficits, there are simply no arguments against deflation and, boy, it is needed after the years of premonetary union restraint.

The prize of growth and jobs is long overdue for a Europe imprisoned by the drive towards monetary union. It would be a tragedy if Europe's politicians are so trapped in the habit of repressing growth that they are unable to seize it.

Unassuming Afrikaner has much to offer South Africa

Even as photographs of a smiling Johann Rupert rolled off the presses in London yesterday, the man himself was about as far from the limelight as one could get. Overnight, the South African millionaire had boarded the company jet — a well-travelled Falcon — and flown back to Cape Town, where a car was waiting to whisk him to the seaside holiday resort of Hermanus, an hour or so up the coast.

A call to his London office was patched through by satellite to his holiday home — to the kitchen, judging by the clattering of pots and pans — where Rupert, 48, was enjoying the last few days of the school holidays with his wife, Gaynor, and their teenage children, Caroline, Hannell and Anton. We chatted courteously, about tobacco empires, luxury goods, and apartheid, and Afrikaner traditions, before Rupert asked to be excused: his golfing friends were waiting.

Rupert had much on which to reflect as he teed off in the Cape sunshine. Barely 48 hours earlier, he had cemented a deal that would once have been considered unimaginable — the £15 billion merger of Rothmans International and British American Tobacco. How far things had come since the late 1940s, when his father, Anton, won the South African distribution rights to the premier Rothmans brands, Fall Mall and Constatine. Few back then gave the elder Rupert much of a hope against BAT's subsidiary, United Tobacco, which had 80 per cent of the South African market.

Rupert keeps in close touch with his father, now 82, who continues to live in Stellenbosch, the Afrikaners' town in the Cape wine lands which became the seat of the family tobacco empire. Rembrandt, the deal has come as an immense source of pride to him. "We have a fantastic relationship, in the sense that I speak to him daily, and it is wonderful to have a wise sounding-board. He still goes to the office, and walks a couple of miles a day. He's in good shape."

The younger Rupert spends much of his time in the UK

and Switzerland, where Rembrandt's parent company, Rembrandt, is based. Rembrandt's interests are spread far and wide — from the Vendôme luxury goods business to Nethold, the pay-TV business that was sold to Canal Plus.

However, his roots remain firmly in South African soil. He clocks up 500 hours a year in the Rembrandt jet — "my father's Falcon", as he calls it — yet has South Africa's interests at heart. He has a house at Somerset West, looking across the Cape Flats towards Table Mountain. His brother, Anthony, is in the wine business. His sister, also Hannell, is a mezzo soprano.

The Ruperts, as Afrikaners, can trace their heritage to 1662, and have no intention of upping sticks. They are of that generation of businessmen who challenged apartheid in its day, and who now feel they have something to offer the "new" South Africa, even if their advice is not always welcome.

Rupert says: "Having been against the previous Government, we are in a position to give some advice. The joke is, in the past, when I was against racism, I was called a communist, and now that I am against communism, I am called a racist. I'm close to these guys, and if I can't tell them, who can?"

Poignantly, the week has brought both triumph and sadness — with the death of Gavin Reilly, former chairman of Anglo American. He died on Sunday, aged 73 — in Hermanus, as it happens — on the eve of the BAT announcement. Anton Rupert accompanied Reilly on his historic visit to Zambia in 1985, when a South African contingent infuriated Pretoria by opening talks with the then-banned African National Congress. The two families have been close for years.

Johann Rupert will take a non-executive seat on the BAT board, but is anxious not to steal the limelight from Martin Broughton, BAT's chairman. Yet Rupert is every bit the modern businessman, as events this week affirm. And the Falcon jet still has some miles left in it.

JON ASHWORTH

Twilight for the twin towers: Wembley may lose its most famous feature if current plans to rebuild the 76-year-old stadium are approved, although a number of obstacles still have to be cleared

It is a classic contest. On one side is Wembley plc, a famous company that recently came within a whisker of insolvency. On the other is Eric, a young, aggressive businessman, whose share price and credibility has been under pressure in recent months. In the middle is the Football Association, a sporting body riddled with turmoil. And at issue is the redevelopment of the most famous football stadium in the world and the chance of England hosting the World Cup in 2006.

The battle over the future of Wembley Stadium has been raging for more than two-and-a-half years and was coming close to a conclusion, of sorts, before Eric's intervention last week. Few believe that the investment group will succeed if it goes forward with its £125m share bid for Wembley, the owner of the famous stadium, despite Wembley shares being at only 28p before this latest twist in the saga. However, Eric's emergence has shown that there are splits in the board of Wembley as well as massive question marks over the proposed £320 million redevelopment of the so-called "venue of legends".

No one doubts that Wembley needs rebuilding. The stadium is 76 years old, its amenities are crumbling. The seats are badly spaced and many do not have backs. The pillars holding up the roof spoil the sight lines for thousands of fans. The toilet facilities are largely housed in make-shift cabins. Transport to the stadium is difficult. To leave

Classic contest rages at 'venue of legends'

Jason Nisse reports on the battle to fund the future of football's national stadium

within an hour of the end of a match is almost impossible.

The stadium's parent company — also called Wembley — expanded by buying the site around the stadium, which includes car parks, the Wembley Arena indoor complex and 43 acres of derelict land. It also bought greyhound tracks in the UK and the US, a gaming business in Rhode Island and the Keith Prowse corporate hospitality business. Over-ambition meant the company ran into financial difficulties in the early 1990s.

Wembley underwent a financial reconstruction which was completed in 1997. The rescue brought many different proposals out of the woodwork, including an offer from Arsenal, the Premier League football team, which is having problems expanding its own stadium. There were dark mutterings about building another national stadium, with venues as diverse as King's Cross, Birmingham and Bradford mentioned. There was even talk of the FA leasing Twickenham for England football games, though both the Rugby Football Union and the local council soon quashed this speculation.

Last April a deal was struck,

in principle, with the Sports Council and the Football Association to sell the stadium. This morning the agreement will be signed. Essentially the English National Stadium Development Company (ENSDC), a joint venture between the Council and the FA, will pay £103 million for Wembley and then spend more than £200 million redeveloping it into, in their words, "the best stadium in the world". The redevelopment is the centrepiece of the FA's bid to bring the World Cup to England in 2006, a bid that faces stiff competition from Germany and South Africa and has been hit by the resignation of Graham Kelly, the FA chief executive, and Keith Wiseman, its chairman, over a loan scandal.

This grand plan is to be backed by £120 million from the National Lottery Fund, the largest award given for a single project. Not surprisingly it has its opponents.

For a start many have ques-

tioned the ability of a quango and a sporting association, neither of which have an unblemished record on running commercial ventures, to run a giant stadium. They point to the cost of the project. One quantity surveyor, who did not want to be named because he is still hoping to be hired on the project, said: "Sunderland built the 40,000-seat Stadium of Light for only £20 million. Even Newcastle United's Castle Leazes project was only going to cost £65 million. How can you spend £200 million building an 80,000-seat stadium?"

Then there are questions about the development plans, which the ENSDC has yet to submit to the local council, the London Borough of Brent. For a start there was a big row when it emerged that the architects proposed knocking down the famous twin towers at the front of the stadium. It seems

that, to make best use of the site, the pitch has to be moved slightly to the north. As the towers are made of concrete and so cannot be moved they would have to be knocked down.

And then it emerged that Brent Council is opposed to just redeveloping the stadium without a project to revitalise the whole Wembley site. This would involve new roads and better links to the Underground and rail services, issues that all cost money.

Then there are worries about whether it is right that National Lottery grant money should be used to buy the stadium, given that the cash, minus some tax and fees for merchant bankers, will then be handed out to Wembley shareholders. Lottery money is not supposed to go to profit-making ventures.

However, the most crucial objection to the £103 million stadium sale are three non-executive directors of Wembley — Jarvis Astaire, one of the founders of the company, Roger Brooke, the chairman of Candeavor, the venture capitalist, and Peter Mead, chairman of Abbot Mead Vickers, the advertising group. Their unpopularity was one of the reasons

why the deal with ENSDC was not signed until yesterday and why Eric became involved.

Eric — a company founded by Joe Lewis, the Bahamas-based billionaire, and which has interests in five European football clubs including Glasgow Rangers — claims that it was invited to put forward a proposal. It is unhappy that its interest leaked out, but then it should be used to that in football. Last year supposed secret talks between Eric and Alan Sugar, chairman of Tottenham Hotspur, to buy his stake in the Premier League club magically became common knowledge without either side claiming to have said anything. The deal cratered.

However, Eric's offer faces many problems. It is offering 200p in cash — 20p a share more than shareholders would receive in the handout from the ENSDC deal — plus 218p in Eric shares. However, Eric shares have lost nearly 60 per cent of their value in the past year, largely because of a legal battle with UEFA, the European football governing body, and so its paper is not a strong currency in the City at the moment.

Given that the deal with ENSDC has now been signed, Eric's approach may have come too late. But it is still not clear how ENSDC is going to be able to raise the extra £200 million that it needs to complete its ambitious plans to redevelop Wembley Stadium. This may give Eric an opportunity to still be involved. The "venue of legends" is fast turning into a quagmire of ambitions.

Rank insider

THE two credible outside candidates to replace Andrew "a smile and a profit warning" Teare at Rank are out of the frame, leaving the field open for Douglas Yates, the obvious internal choice.

Ken Hanna, who unbundled Dailly, yesterday joined Compass Partners, a venture capital outfit set up by John Clark, former chief executive at BET, and a couple of bankers.

Hanna was favourite to become Rank's chief executive but it seems he has tired of the directors' inability to

make up their minds. He initially tried to play down speculation about Rank by claiming he did not want to spend his life breaking things up. Now he is on to make a packet picking up the pieces at Compass after other corporate break-ups.

Coincidentally, I hear that the second outside candidate, Class Initiative of Wembley, has been told by Rank that he will not be getting the job. There is still no sign of that bid that former manager John Garrett was definitely — repeat, definitely — going to make before Christmas, I see.

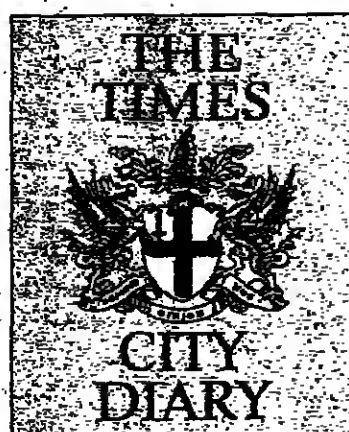
So expect Yates, acting chief executive, to be appointed in due course. Whether this will be enough to mollify the institutions and restore the Rank fortunes remains to be seen.

THE latest sightings of Nicola, the four-mouthed eight-year-old, and her advice to the British Airways pilot arrive from as far afield as Air Europe 15 years ago, the Ministry of Defence and the junior section of a small library in rural Cheshire, where her note was swiftly removed from view.

I think we have established that it does not date from a British Airways cockpit last week. I ring my BA source, who is still sceptical. "It might be a copy of a previous document that was thrust forward to the flight deck," he says. Enough.



"Blues section: Have a look in our accounts department"



So playful

UNEXPECTED signs of a sense of humour from Jacques Attali, polymath and former head of the European Central Bank until expensive tastes led to his downfall. His play about Charles V, the 16th-century Holy Roman Emperor, opens in Paris today and there is a gala performance on January 18.

To the latter he has invited Mikhail Gorbachev and Baroness Thatcher and spouse, who are more likely to be found on the far side of the moon come curtain-up. I would have thought. It is, after all, hard to see the Iron Lady comprehending, let alone tolerating, two hours of turgid history in French about a man who conquered most of Europe.

Still, it all adds to the advance publicity, which our playwright has ensured will be entirely positive. The critics are denied a look at the masterwork until well after the gala night.

Bob a job

THE newspaper advertisement yesterday for a lawyer to earn £1 million, sorry, "to £1 million-plus", which covers a wide range, attracted plenty of publicity for the headhunter involved, QD Legal. Strangely, inquiries show there is no such job.

An executive at the headhunter admitted there is no one position guaranteeing that salary. The "immensely profitable" US law firm involved hopes to fill a number, and one has the "potential" to earn such a high sum — assuming the ability to bring in £3 million to £4 million of new business.

Still, the ad will have brought in the names of a few highly-paid lawyers who might be interested in changing jobs. You never know when these might come in handy.

AN AMERICAN multimillionaire with two Internet company start-ups behind him has quit to spare his latest, USWeb/CKS Corporation, from "public relations complications". As well he might. Joe Firmage, 28, believes advanced technology was handed to us by aliens. So he is off to find them. Firmage, like most Americans, claims he has already met one. "There's a bigger picture out there than just tomorrow's stock price."

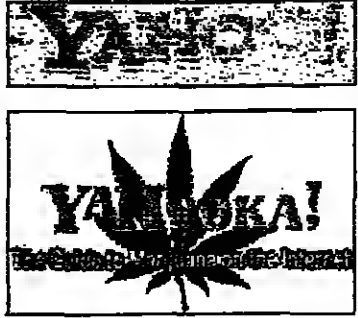
Boo hoo

ELSEWHERE in far-out corporate America, Yahoo, the eccentrically named provider of Internet Services, is proving remarkably uncool about a spoof site with a similar name that has emerged. YaHooka is devoted to drug chat and paraphernalia and, as you can see from the illustration below, is not unlike Yahoo's own.

The \$40 billion US corporation has already taken action against a sex site with a similar name. But the pot-heads, based in Oklahoma City, are proving more resilient, or possibly more difficult to spur into anything resembling action. They claim the site does not make a profit and is purely informative.

"The name just came together," drawled a spokesman. "It wasn't a conscious decision." Like, right.

MARTIN WALLER
martin.waller@the-times.co.uk



Airlines, competition and the rival attractions of video-conferencing

From Mr A. G. Phillips

Str. Cut-throat competition is blamed for BA's current woes (report and Tempus, January 7). Competition is widely believed to be in the best interests of the consumer, though it is difficult to see how, even in the high-tech world of aviation.

Air fares are sky-high, there is congestion both within airports and in the airspace around them and business customers waste valuable working time. Airline load factors remain stubbornly below 70 per cent on average. In total,

this represents an enormous waste of resources, energy and potential shareholders' profit.

But, as Tempus wisely observes, more and more firms are discovering the benefits of video-conferencing. Most business meetings are about exchanging ideas.

So why travel at the speed of sound to do so when you can, at far less cost, do so at the speed of light?

Yours faithfully,
ANTHONY G. PHILLIPS,
32 Upper Street,
Salisbury,
Wiltshire SP2 8LY.

Trade with Cuba

From the President, US-Cuba Trade and Economic Council
Sir, Your article "SB to barter for Cuba meningitis vaccine" (Business News, January 11) states that "American legislation prohibits trade with Cuba".

This is not true. The Helms-Burton Law permits sanctions against non-United States-based companies which are deemed by the United States Department of State to be us-

ing an asset within the Republic of Cuba upon which there exists a claim certified by the Foreign Claims Settlement Commission in Washington DC.

Trade between the United States and the Republic of Cuba is limited, not prohibited. Yours faithfully,
JOHN S. KAVULICH II,
President,
US-Cuba Trade and Economic Council,
30 Rockefeller Plaza,
New York, NY 10012.

THE TIMES WEDNESDAY JANUARY 13 1999

[illegible]

Equities reverse early gains

TRADING PERIOD: Settlement takes place five business days after the day of trade. Changes are calculated on the previous day's close, but adjustments are made when a stock is ex-dividend. Changes, yields and price/earnings ratios are based on middle prices.

ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	PE
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BANKS

BREWERIES, PUSS & REST									
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2.40	2.30	James Watson	2.35	+0.05	+0.5	18.5			
2.30	2.20	James Watson	2.25	+0.05	+0.5	18.5			
2.20	2.10	James Watson	2.15	+0.05	+0.5	18.5			
2.10	2.00	James Watson	2.05	+0.05	+0.5	18.5			
2.00	1.90	James Watson	1.95	+0.05	+0.5	18.5			
1.90	1.80	James Watson	1.85	+0.05	+0.5	18.5			
1.80	1.70	James Watson	1.75	+0.05	+0.5	18.5			
1.70	1.60	James Watson	1.65	+0.05	+0.5	18.5			
1.60	1.50	James Watson	1.55	+0.05	+0.5	18.5			
1.50	1.40	James Watson	1.45	+0.05	+0.5	18.5			
1.40	1.30	James Watson	1.35	+0.05	+0.5	18.5			
1.30	1.20	James Watson	1.25	+0.05	+0.5	18.5			
1.20	1.10	James Watson	1.15	+0.05	+0.5	18.5			
1.10	1.00	James Watson	1.05	+0.05	+0.5	18.5			
1.00	0.90	James Watson	0.95	+0.05	+0.5	18.5			
0.90	0.80	James Watson	0.85	+0.05	+0.5	18.5			
0.80	0.70	James Watson	0.75	+0.05	+0.5	18.5			
0.70	0.60	James Watson	0.65	+0.05	+0.5	18.5			
0.60	0.50	James Watson	0.55	+0.05	+0.5	18.5			
0.50	0.40	James Watson	0.45	+0.05	+0.5	18.5			
0.40	0.30	James Watson	0.35	+0.05	+0.5	18.5			
0.30	0.20	James Watson	0.25	+0.05	+0.5	18.5			
0.20	0.10	James Watson	0.15	+0.05	+0.5	18.5			
0.10	0.00	James Watson	0.05	+0.05	+0.5	18.5			
0.00	0.00	James Watson	0.00	+0.00	+0.5	18.5			

ELECTRICITY									
High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	PE			
2.20	2.10	Edison	2.15	+0.05	+2.3	22.0			
2.10	2.00	Edison	2.05	+0.05	+2.4	22.0			
2.00	1.90	Edison	1.95	+0.05	+2.6	22.0			
1.90	1.80	Edison	1.85	+0.05	+2.7	22.0			
1.80	1.70	Edison	1.75	+0.05	+2.9	22.0			
1.70	1.60	Edison	1.65	+0.05	+3.0	22.0			
1.60	1.50	Edison	1.55	+0.05	+3.2	22.0			
1.50	1.40	Edison	1.45	+0.05	+3.4	22.0			
1.40	1.30	Edison	1.35	+0.05	+3.7	22.0			
1.30	1.20	Edison	1.25	+0.05	+4.0	22.0			
1.20	1.10	Edison	1.15	+0.05	+4.5	22.0			
1.10	1.00	Edison	1.05	+0.05	+5.0	22.0			
1.00	0.90	Edison	0.95	+0.05	+5.6	22.0			
0.90	0.80	Edison	0.85	+0.05	+6.3	22.0			
0.80	0.70	Edison	0.75	+0.05	+7.1	22.0			
0.70	0.60	Edison	0.65	+0.05	+8.0	22.0			
0.60	0.50	Edison	0.55	+0.05	+9.1	22.0			
0.50	0.40	Edison	0.45	+0.05	+10.5	22.0			
0.40	0.30	Edison	0.35	+0.05	+12.0	22.0			
0.30	0.20	Edison	0.25	+0.05	+13.8	22.0			
0.20	0.10	Edison	0.15	+0.05	+15.8	22.0			
0.10	0.00	Edison	0.05	+0.05	+18.2	22.0			
0.00	0.00	Edison	0.00	+0.00	+21.1	22.0			

The In and Out club at No 94 Piccadilly has moved on and one of London's great properties is now for sale, writes Rachel Kelly

£50 million buys the home, address and history

For sale: urban splendour on a spectacular scale. One of London's most historic houses, previously home to the Naval and Military Club, officially goes on the market this week for £50 million after months of speculation on its future.

The former home of Lord Palmerston, at No 94 Piccadilly, has been empty since last month when members of the club, nicknamed the "In and Out" after the prominent signs on its gateposts topped with lanterns left after 133 years. Next month they are due to walk across London en masse to new premises in St James's.

FDP Savills and Pannell Kerr Forster are advising its Kuwaiti owners on the sale of the Palladian-fronted building. The owners have investigated the possibility of turning the 50-bedroom establishment into an hotel or possibly a foreign embassy, and have also received expressions of interest from several wealthy foreigners who wish to turn the building back into a private house.

When it reverts to private use the house will be one of the capital's finest properties, complete with ornate ballroom and a wide enclosed courtyard at the back with a fountain and plane trees, beneath which A.E.W. Mason began writing *The Four Feathers*. Once called Egremont House, the property was built for the 1st Lord Egremont and was designed



Urban splendour: this historic house has been home since 1866 to the Naval and Military Club — known as the In and Out club. The Kuwaiti owners have decided to sell the former home of Lord Palmerston, which has 50 bedrooms, a ballroom and a library

Photograph: James Morgan

by Matthew Brettingham between 1756 and 1760. It was later occupied by the Duke of Cambridge, and from 1855 to 1865 it was home to Lord Palmerston. The In and Out club moved in on a long lease in 1866.

As well as boasting a private staircase for Palmerston's spies, it

was also the scene of an attack on Queen Victoria by a madman brandishing a stick. It has housed such illustrious men as Scott of the Antarctic and Lord Baden-Powell, the founder of the Scouts. The Admiral of the Fleet the Marquess of Milford Haven and the grandfather of the club's president, the Duke of Edinburgh, died on the premises in 1921.

The Grade I listed building is said to be frequented by the ghost of Major W.H. Braddell, wearing his greatcoat. He miraculously survived when a German bomb killed everyone else in the club's dining room in 1940.

A spokesman for FPD Savills refused to comment on the sale, but it is believed to include other property, including the freehold of several nearby shops, and the lease of three houses in Half Moon Street that were previously used as bedrooms by the club. There are thought to be at least 50 bedrooms

in the main house, plus a library and the magnificent paneled octagon room.

The In and Out club has now moved to new premises at 4 St James's Square, once home to Lady Astor, Britain's first sitting woman MP, and later this month Bonhams will be auctioning re-

maining chattels, including furniture, pictures, mirrors and wooden knick-knacks.

Perhaps the only other London mansion on the market that compares with the In and Out is No 1 Cambridge Gate, Regent's Park. The late Victorian house, with its 40 rooms and domed swimming pool that turns into a ballroom, is unsold at £15 million.

Avril Butt of De Groot Colles, which is handling the sale, is confident that the asking price will be met because this end of the market is "more recession-proof". Palace-seekers prepared to venture beyond the metropolis could consider Luton Hoo, a stately home on a huge 1,500-acre Bedfordshire estate that housed the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh on their honeymoon, and was also used in the hit British film *Four Weddings and a Funeral*.

The estate includes a Grade I listed mansion, 47 houses and cottages, a lake and parkland. The property was for sale for £25 million more than a year ago and has still not found a buyer. Now the main house, five cottages and 500 acres are for sale for £10 million.

Others could consider Mentmore Towers, in Buckinghamshire, on the market since November 1997. A Victorian 60-bedroom mansion that once belonged to Lord Rosebery, the house is accompanied by 80 acres of woodland and ornamental grounds.

Houses? Not in my neck of the woods

The population of Cambridgeshire is likely to grow at 3½ times the national average over the next 20 or 30 years. A report by the Office for National Statistics predicts that the number of people living in the county will rise by 24.6 per cent by 2021 to 678,600 — a jump of 134,000. The national average is expected to be 6.9 per cent over that period.

But the popularity of Cambridgeshire is creating some problems. The most serious is the urgent need for new housing, while a complete overhaul of the road network and public transport system is vital.

Cambridge's economic boom and its ability to attract the world's leading high-tech companies — such as Microsoft — is causing a bureaucratic headache for planners keen to preserve the region's past yet faced with the reality of needing more than 100,000 extra homes.

Even at this stage there is a dispute over the number of homes required: a central government figure puts it at 122,500 by 2016 compared with the local authority projection of 96,500. This, coupled with the huge budget required to create a viable transport network linking proposed new "settlements" in the county, will be the subject of a major public planning inquiry to be held at Ely next month. It will allow local councils, housing advisers — including the House Builders' Federation (HBF) — and individual developers to make their views known to a panel of government-appointed experts.

Cambridge's Carey, a partner of the East Anglian property consultants Bidwells, says: "Our greatest problem is creating viable new country settlements. Ten years ago, there

Cambridgeshire needs more homes, but it does not want to destroy its green belt. Diana Wildman reports

was an agreement in principle between the local authorities and a consortium of developers to build a 3,000-home project called Cambourne, eight miles west of Cambridge, complete with 750,000 sq ft of commercial space, a school, pubs and shops. "Nothing has happened because there is an impasse between the local authority and the housebuilders. Under the Section 106 agreement, the developers have agreed to provide certain forms of transport including some roads and cycle tracks, but not before they start building. The local authority wants the roads in place beforehand. The developers naturally want to start building before committing themselves."

The greatest problem, Mr Carey says, is transport. "This Government decided to cancel a large number of new road projects which saved billions of pounds. The consequence for Cambridgeshire is to create new villages well away from the city. There has to be a reasonable transport system and now there is no funding available."

"The local authority is keen to build on parts of the Fens but it will take so long to reach Cambridge because of the lack of decent transport facilities

that no one will want to move there. It is impractical."

David Henry, head of planning at Savills's Cambridge office, says there must be a fresh approach towards new village plans within the green belt. "The green belt will have to be violated as we simply have to put all this housing somewhere," he says. "Our local papers are full of these problems. Cambridge commuter traffic

is so dreadful that more and more people, as they trade up, want to move into the city or live in the more accessible suburbs where, over the past two years, a five-bedroom detached house set in a couple of acres has risen from £400,000 to £500,000," he says. "First-time buyers, however, are waiting longer and want either a

two-bedroom flat or house. We have 20,000 students to accommodate during term-time and a large amount of inner-city purchases are by investors."

Marc Cranfield-Adams, a spokesman for HBF, believes that the government recommendation for an extra 122,500 homes is more realistic than the number suggested by the local planners. "The issue facing planners as recommended by the Government is to take economic growth and the interest of stakeholders into account," he says. "This

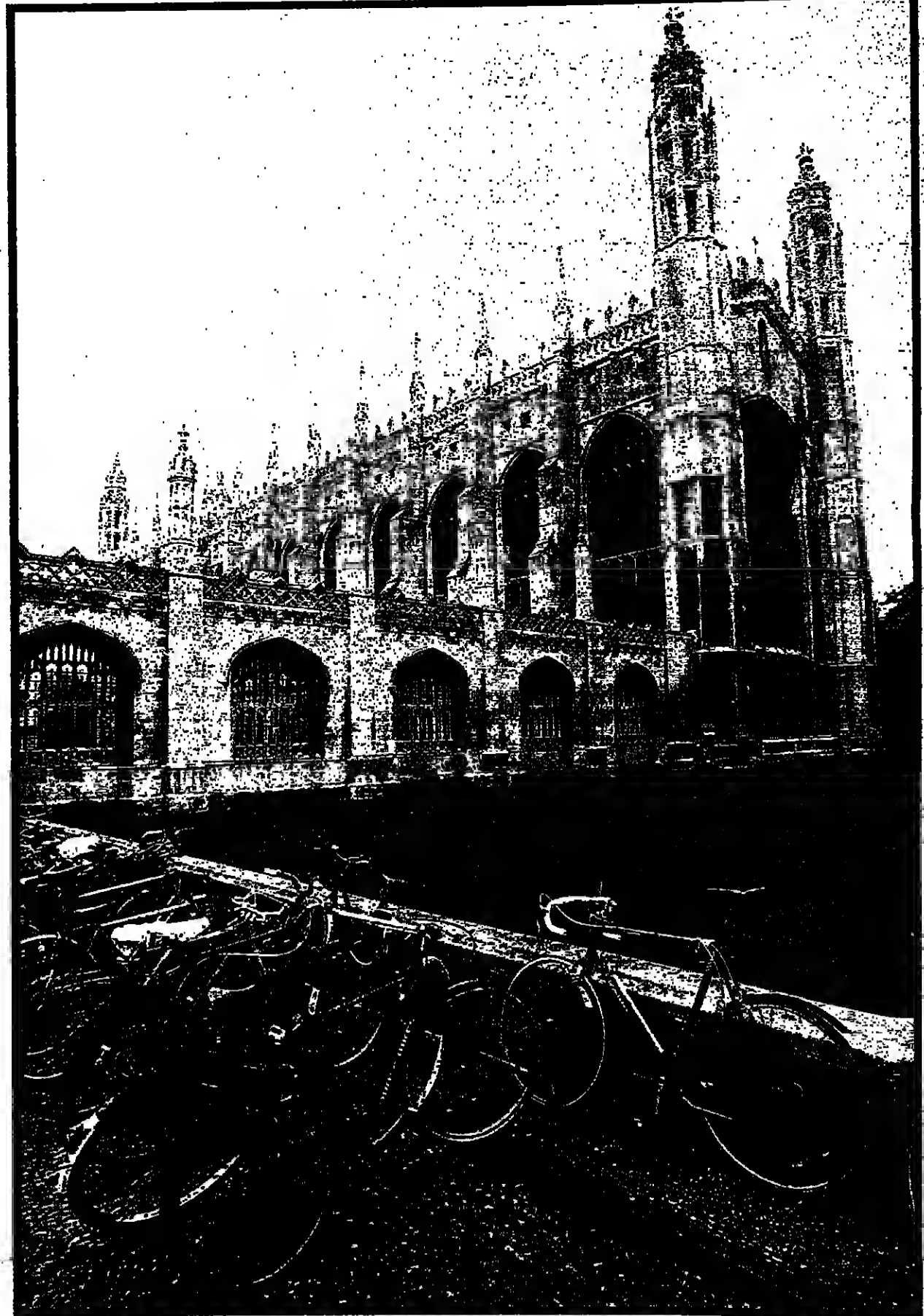
all has implications, in particular for Cambridge's green belt boundaries, and the House Builders' Federation will draw attention to the need for an examination of the green belt and the possibility of other forms of development."

Mr Carey believes that the two fundamental and inescapable issues are an inflexible bureaucracy and the huge amount of funding required to solve the transport and housing problems.

"On one hand, the Government is urging the use of brownfield sites for housing. There are certain areas within Cambridge which are ideal for residential use, such as the old railway sidings in Chesterton in the northeast suburbs. This is where people want to live and environmentally it is an excellent option. But the local authority guidelines and those of the Government, although both Labour, differ. It is all very well for the Government to state that we must increase the housing stock by one quarter but the council doesn't necessarily want to grant a change in planning use on brownfield sites."

"Then there is the requirement for housebuilders to include social housing — up to 25 per cent on any urban scheme. Builders don't like this restraint, especially on a low-density scheme, so a degree of realism simply has to be introduced."

Political infighting must stop, transport and housing must be planned in tandem and developers and the local authority must be more flexible. If this does not happen, it is unlikely that the Government's housing goal for Cambridgeshire by 2016 — and the continuing international investment in the region — will be met.



Price of success: bicycles are fine if you live in town, but Cambridge's commuter traffic is a headache for council planners



Why your pet should not be seen or heard

WE MAY be a nation of animal lovers, but when it comes to selling a house, it's often a different story. Dogs on the loose, cat litter trays, hamsters in bedrooms, not to mention more exotic pets, can put potential buyers and estate agents off your property.

Many agents have tales of animal encounters. Nigel Steele, at Strutt & Parker in Norwich, has been bitten four times by dogs while viewing houses, with the last incident costing him a pair of trousers, while John Husband, at Humberstons, just managed to dodge a potentially sticky incident with a spitting llama.

Mike Dunning, at Lane Fox in Winchester, still recalls an encounter with a parrot residing in a property he was selling. "The parrot insisted on screeching obscenities at visitors from its perch as they came through the front door. So we covered its cage with a thick duvet and managed to quieten it down," he says.

"We all know that animals, whether they be cats, dogs, guinea-pigs or parrots, form part of the family. But over-af-

fected pets, happily barking and jumping up at visitors, can scare people and could put off a potential purchaser.

"Dogs should be banished to the kennel, baskets should be tidied up or away and cats should be removed from the sofa and beds. For many there's nothing worse than a faint waft of dog blankets, gnawed bones or soggy cat litter."

Andrew Dewar, at Curchods, says: "However friendly your pets, hide them away for viewing because you simply do not know what fears, allergies and dislikes prospective purchasers may have. It's not just the animals that can be detrimental to a sale, it's the aftermath, including smells, dog hairs and the mess they make in the garden. Make sure you remove all of the above, as well as the animals, before a viewing."

Michael Bedford, at Bedfords in Burnham Market, recalls clients trying to sell their West Norfolk home: "People were looking round the property and kept complaining about the dogs. I went round for a visit, and it was like having two por-

following you around. It was very intimidating. Eventually I told the vendors to lock their dogs away, and they sold the house shortly afterwards."

"Many people coming out of London do not have large dogs so are naturally wary of them. It is better to put the animals in another room, and when you go to it, ask the viewers if they mind dogs."

THE BRIEFCASE of Conrad Payne, at Cluttons Daniel Smith in Tunbridge Wells, recently came off worse in an encounter with a young pup. Luckily the incident occurred when he was valuing the property.

More exotic pets can also pose problems. James Bailey, at Douglas & Gordon in Fulham, recalls a client who owned a pet piranha, which he fed on live lobsters. "As you can imagine, this did little to impress applicants viewing the house, and eventually we had to coordinate feeding times so that they didn't coincide with viewings."

A python held up the proceedings for

Hamptons International in Fulham last year. The first time the buyer viewed the flat, the snake was in a cage and he particularly said that he hated reptiles.

At the second viewing, the party was halfway round the house when they suddenly noticed that the snake was not in his cage. The buyer left in an instant. Just before he was about to exchange, he made the negotiator go round to the flat with him to check that the snake was not there.

But imagine buying a house complete with an unruly pet. A property for sale, with a resident Vietnamese pot-bellied pig, posed something of a problem for Mr Steele. The pig had taken over the vendors' lives completely, and they had decided that selling up was the only way to get away from their pet.

"It was a pretty house, but most people ran a mile," Mr Steele says. "Someone did actually buy, but I am not sure how long the pig lasted."

AMANDA LOOSE

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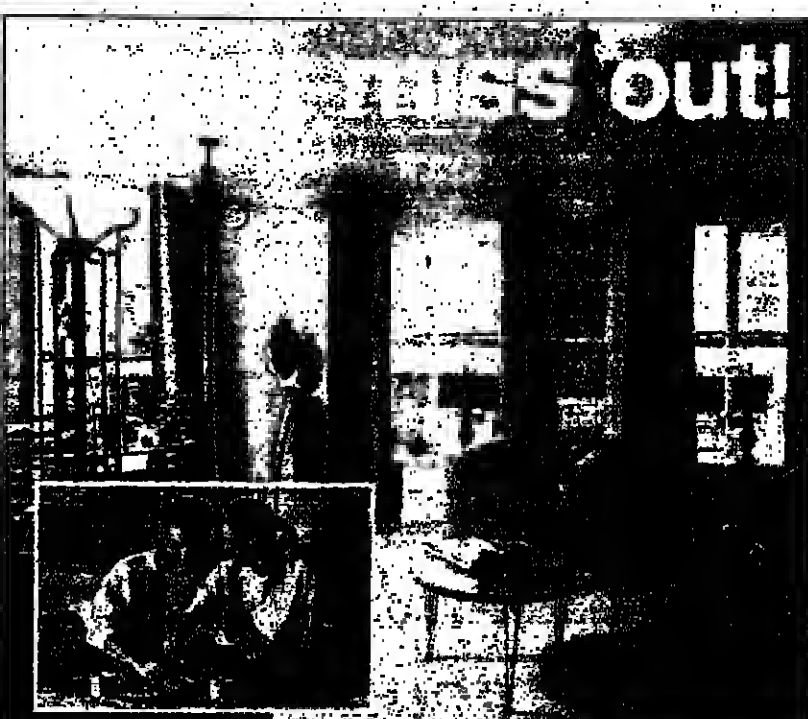
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A hard sister act to follow

It isn't Frank's day. He has been in Düsseldorf selling health foods, and during his absence, his mother-in-law has died. Since Europe is enduring a winter freeze, it has taken him 14 hours to get back to Yorkshire, and he has spent much of that time being loved by "a woman from Carlisle who runs a puppet theatre for the deaf". And what happens when he arrives home? His wife Teresa and her two sisters are at each other's throats and, before long, at his too. "It's like marrying into the Borgias," decides Mark Lambert's doleful Frank.

At best *The Memory of Water* is terrifically enjoyable. It puts you in mind of Ayckbourn, Bennett and Joe Orton: but the author is the almost unknown Shelagh Stephenson, a dramatist with a sharp eye and a gift for quirky dialogue to match. Her play impressed at its premiere in Hampstead in 1996, and does so again now, though mainly when the funnier characters are given their heads. When Stephenson attempts to deepen the situation, her touch gets less sure.

The time for the funeral approaches. Two sisters go eccentrically to pieces. The youngest and scattiest, Julia Sawalha's Catherine, bangs about in egomaniacal disarray, maddening everyone else with her hypochondria, her psychological problems, her obsession with the latest of her 78 lovers. Meanwhile the oldest, Teresa, moves first into martyr mode and then, sensing that her self-sacrifices have not made the others feel guilty enough, spectacularly hits the bottle. Need I say that Alison Steadman rises splendidly to the comic occasion?

THEATRE

But tragedy, especially tragedy-comedy with intellectual pretensions, is a challenging genre, and you become increasingly aware that, while Teresa, Catherine and Frank exist primarily to provoke laughter, you are meant to care about the second sister, Samantha Bond's cool, incisive Mary. She is the family high-flyer, a 39-year-old doctor with a married lover, a longing for a child and an agonising secret in her past. She also has some emotionally loaded scenes, with Margot Leicester as the ghost of the mother who loved and resented her. It's weighty stuff, and so, in a different way, is Stephenson's theme, which is the nature, the importance and the self-serving subjectivity of memory. But isn't there something self-conscious about her mentions of Alzheimer's disease and homeopathic theory and her attempts to relate them to sisterly arguments about Mum and the past? Similarly, isn't there something troubling about a play which treats family politics with great intelligence, yet takes one of its victims more seriously than the others? Yes, but take comfort. You will probably be laughing too much at Stephenson's inventive dialogue and Terry Johnson's pacy production to worry.

BENEDICT NIGHTINGALE



Such devoted sisters: Julia Sawalha, Alison Steadman and Samantha Bond as the three siblings in Shelagh Stephenson's tragicomic play, *The Memory of Water*

Demented feats of funny clay

Do the hands of the divine mould man's nature, or do the mortal forces that surround him? In Joseph Nadj's free adaptation of Büchner's *Woyzeck*, opening the London International Mime Festival, malleable clay becomes the stuff of human matter: it is smeared across faces to create a deathly grey complexion, it is moulded into little figures and felt affectionately; at the apex of the violent and demented action a full-sized human bust of minutely lifelike detail has its entire face sliced off and crushed. The human beings, in their turn, are treated like some kind of cheap raw material to be pressed into shape at the hands of the military authorities.

Nadj has dispensed altogether with Büchner's text, exploring the themes of obsession and repression through fluid ensemble mime. The physical invention is breathtaking: at one point a soldier is "created" from scratch: a full-sized man thrown about in a blanket as if he were nothing but a strange-shaped rag and then inserted into a uniform nailed to a door. The constant threat of destruction overshadows the action: one character is decorated with a pair of nooses, knives are thrown about and apples and eggs crushed into pulp. When *Woyzeck* does eventually submit to his violent impulses, they are taken to cannibalistic extremes: the destruction of those around him being destruction of the

self: whereon he begins to eat himself. There are great moments of humour among the madness, including a surreal cycle race in which the competitors have to carry their vehicles around in order to overtake one another. The detailing is meticulous and understated; one character has a raining hat, another two real birds in a cage, another produces whole eggs from thin air. Such little elements of magic take place almost incidentally: indeed the action on the stage is so rich that much passes by unnoticed.

At the level of performance and choreography, this is silent theatre at its physically demanding best. The disturbing claustrophobia established on the shabby little stage is equal to anything attempted in the effects-rich world of cinema, and the overshadowing sense of wrongness is even more impressive for being largely unattached to any notion of plot or linear action. It seems a shame that the subject-matter is so esoteric, since this talented company is unlikely to convert any numphobes to the cause.

However, those prepared to leap into the featureless void are likely to be haunted by Nadj's horrible vision long after the demented action has finished.

HETTIE JUDAH

GREAT BRITISH HOPES

Rising stars in the arts firmament

SHERIDAN SMITH

Age: 17.

Profession: "All-round entertainer," to quote her CV.

Where can she be seen? At the Donmar Warehouse for another five weeks in the revival of the 1987 Stephen Sondheim-James Lapine musical *Into the Woods*. As directed by John Crowley, Smith puts a delightfully blunt and impish Yorkshire spin on the character of Little Red Riding Hood, even if not a few American tourists have mistaken her North of England accent for Cockney.

A Yorkshire Red Riding Hood? And why not? At the auditions, recalls the Doncaster native, "there was never any sense of 'You have got to do it this way.' I felt a bit strange doing the part in a posh accent, so I said, 'Would you mind me just trying it out in my own voice?' They said, 'You do it however you feel best,' and then when I actually got the part, I just kept on with it."

Was it a taxing role? "I found that she was quite a lot like me, actually. Riding Hood comes across all sweet and innocent, when actually she's just this cheeky little thing who speaks her mind and eats a lot — which is a lot like me."

Does she come naturally by her talents? Sounds that way: Smith's parents are country-and-western performers, and her 23-year-old brother is into Oasis and has his own band. The family has encouraged her through four years with the National Youth Music Theatre: three separate engagements playing the title role in *Annie*, and a West End run as Tallulah in *Bugsy Malone*. "Mum and Dad have never pushed me to do anything. They always say, 'Are you still happy?' If I ever said no I'm not, they'd come and get me and take me home."



So is she happy? Most definitely — "this is really exciting, the biggest thing I've ever done" — notwithstanding the seasonal perils of flu. "We've got all the medicines," Smith says of the show's distal players, who share a dressing room. "It's just that time of year; touch wood, I've not been too bad."

MATT WOLF

Several kisses short of a ball

Every classical ballet company would be proud to have a ballerina like Michael Corder's *Cinderella*. His award-winning setting of the Prokofiev score is well stocked with fine classical writ-

ing, elegant and exhilarating choreography that penetrates deep within the corps and brings a regal sheen to the entire company.

Corder's production, created for English National Ballet in 1996, owes its allegiance to 19th-century Russia and, unlike Ashton's for the Royal Ballet, nothing to English pantomime. He frames the stage with shimmering, ensemble work and he isn't afraid of thinking big in his set pieces: *Cinderella*'s entrance to the ball is magnificent, the Act II pas de deux grandly declarative, and Act III's moonlit finale majestic.

For the soloists, the choreography wears its emotions lightly but clearly. *Cinderella*'s sadness is held in long reel-antholic phrases, while her fantasies are evoked in dances of felicity and grace. The Stepsisters move with staccato fire, pointedly devoid of charm.

The downside to Corder's production, now revived for ENB's winter season in London, is that it exposes weaknesses in the company's ranks, and on Monday night these



were considerable (although flu necessitated some hasty rearranging of casting). They were most evident in the four couples who make up the Fairies and their Cavaliers. Corder's writing for them is tricky — and proved too much.

The leading couple, visitors from the Boston Ballet, also disappointed. Larissa Ponomareva, trained in Russia, has the technical equipment necessary for Corder's heroine. She is a lovely stylist, allowing one phrase to melt into another most attractively. And her trapped butterfly of a *Cinderella* skims the stage in wonderfully fleet bourées as she tries to find small delights in her life of drudgery.

For someone who spends so much time cooking and cleaning she is surprisingly gracious, a princess in waiting. Yet when she meets her Prince

nothing happens. Remote and self-absorbed, her *Cinderella* could barely bring herself to look at the Frenchman Patrick Armand on Monday, and if they were radiating interpersonal warmth on stage it certainly didn't reach the stalls.

Armand, for his part, looked like a Prince with a lot on his mind. He rushed on to the stage in the ballroom scene already tense and bad-tempered. Yes, he has great finesse and strength as a dancer, but his demeanour was so grim that one wondered what he was doing at this party. Seeing *Cinderella* didn't improve his spirits either, and his Gallic hauteur never left him.

ENB soloists Simone Clarke and Elisabeth Miesge did the home team proud with their double act as the sniggering, mean-spirited Stepsisters who take great pleasure in taunting *Cinderella*. The music was another plus. Patrick Flynn conducted Prokofiev's opulent score, encouraging ENB's Orchestra on to an impressive display of lushness and grandeur.

DEBRA CRAINE

OPERA: Rodney Milnes struggles with a pair of musical curiosities

Lurve in a cold climate

A curious evening. Vanessa, Samuel Barber's grand romantic opera, was given a slap-up premiere at the New York Met in 1958, with the leading singers of the day in decor by Cecil Beaton, and has occasionally been revived. The first British performance was given on Monday by the Other Theatre Company in the Studio Theatre at the Lyric Hammersmith: a reduced orchestra had been promised, but in the event the performance was accompanied by piano only and a justifiably defensive programme note about "workshop" conditions in preparation for a full-scale production. We have been warned.

Vanessa needs all the help it can get. Gian Carlo Menotti's libretto deals with "lurve" rather than love, in syntax that might bring a blush even to the cheek of Dame Barbara Cartland. The Scandinavian aristocrat of the title has been waiting in her Nordic fastness for the return of her Lost Love for 20 years; he, or rather the Lost Love's son, turns up, instantly seduces Vanessa's niece Erika, but eventually goes off with Vanessa to start life afresh in their new mansion in Paris (delete Cartland, insert Daisy Ashford). At curtain-fall, Erika is left waiting. The characters, like those in certain plays by Rattigan and Coward, or indeed Poulenc's *Voix humaine*, make sense only if you acknowledge that they are all men.

Barber's score is unashamedly, efficiently neo-romantic: conventional arias, duets and dance scenes, with a fine quietist to round the evening off. Much of it is very beautiful. But in the context of earlier American operas like *Porgy and Bess* and *Street Scene*, not to mention what was happening in Europe (*Billy Budd* was already seven years old), it is in a time-warped, already a historical curiosity.

And, quite apart from the absence of an orchestra, it received no help whatsoever. Healthy operatic voices made no concession to the tiny space — the sound level was ear-splitting — and the action was virtually undirected: characterisation, motivation even at this Mills and Boon level, were fatally ill-defined. The



Ear-splitting: Meryl Richardson (Vanessa) and Evan Bowers (Anatol)

role was cruelly miscast, and only the excellent mezzo Louise Mott (Erika) and the experienced Richard Angas (the would-be Chekhovian Doctor) emerged unscathed.

A brave effort, or irresponsibly foolhardy? Either way, I'm not sure this should ever have been out before a paying public.

There's no getting away from it: *The Golden Cockerel* is a profoundly mysterious work. Why did the tsarist authorities react so violently to this fairytale fantasy, dangerously only in its own over-lengthy incoherence, and subversive only to the most paranoid of censors? Why did Rimsky set it? Is it just the sensational suc-

cess of Diaghilev's danced version, seen in London in 1914, that has given it the tag of Rimsky's best opera? (It isn't.) What on earth is it about?

Oh, the hell with it, lie back and enjoy the music, which is all Sadler's Wells audiences can do with any profit when faced with the Royal Opera's staging. Tim Hopkins's scatter-shot production, hurling out images as varied as the Winter Palace-as-hospital and Boris Yeltsin as pop star in the hope that some will hit the mark, is little help: it's an evening for do-it-yourself decoders, if they can be bothered when the grey-box set offers little visual enchantment and the action is so innocent of fantasy, so joyless, with scarcely a laugh all evening. The language barrier is virtually insuperable: reading jokes on superlides is not the same as hearing and watching them being delivered.

But with Gennady Rozhdestvensky at his most genial back in the pit after the illness that prevented him conducting the first night, the purely musical rewards were substantial last Thursday: he loves this music, never hurries it, relishes Rimsky's near-paradisiac "exotic" colouring, caresses the chamber-music delicacy of the instrumentation. The ROH Orchestra played beautifully for him.

And the alternate cast boasted some excellent singers, trying desperately to communicate with a numbed audience. Daria Tarkova's Queen of Shemakha was no mechanical nightingale: she has a really meaty, neo-soprano soprano with sufficient agility to skitter above the stage — lovely, Vladimir Matorin (Dodon) both fields characteristically Russian, polished-granite bass sound and has delightfully mobile features: he came nearest to getting some of the comedy across. His colleague from the Bolshoi, Mikhail Agafonov, negotiated the Astrologer's high notes fearlessly, not always beautifully, but certainly authentically. Anne Dawson (Cockerel), Gillian Knight (Amelia) and Timothy Robinson (Quidion) sang strongly but were largely defeated by the staging. Thank heavens for Rozhdestvensky.

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Top performers take middle ground

Rushden goalkeeper arrives at Elland Road via Las Vegas

Feuer relishes his unexpected spell in the limelight

By RICHARD HOBSON

IAN FEUER is one member of the Rushden and Diamonds side who will not be star-struck by the bright lights and packed stands at Elland Road tonight. After a childhood mingling in the company of A-list celebrities, an evening with Lucas Radebe and Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink is unlikely to provoke an outbreak of goosebumps.

Jet-skiing with Diana Ross on the Queen of Motown's private water near Lake Tahoe remains just one memory of his formative years in the United States, yet, if the lifestyle of his Las Vegas youth seems to be a world away from an FA Cup third-round replay against Leeds United in the cold of Yorkshire, then Feuer has no regrets about taking the family name into another branch of the entertainment industry. He has quite an act to follow. Ron, his father, Ron, is a keyboard player who lined up in backing bands for Ross, Elvis Presley and Paul Anka and now makes records of his own. Rusty, his mother, trod the boards as a showgirl on the biggest stages in Vegas, helping to open evenings for the likes of Frank Sinatra and Sammy Davis Jr. She now runs her own agency.

For eight years, Debbie, a sister, was better known as Mrs Mickey Rourke, having married and divorced one of Hollywood's most charismatic actors, the star of *9½ Weeks*. Feuer's second sister owns an art gallery in Rodeo Drive, Beverly Hills, while his two brothers play in the rock group Fifth Dimension.

Feuer, 27, said: "It was a pretty nomadic childhood because when I was on vacation from school, my dad would take me with him on tours with people like Diana Ross. I got to see a lot of America."

At that age, I did not realise people like Sinatra were major stars. They were just people who were around. "The problem with being a kid in Las Vegas is that everything is geared towards people over 18. Otherwise, there is not a lot to do. Basically, everybody used to have house parties and I suppose where Diana Ross was concerned the house was bigger than usual. I have a photograph at home of me as a kid in a wetsuit with her in the background. I used to like going around because of the terrific barbecues and the lake."

Despite achieving a reasonable level of competence on the piano, his own ambitions soon

in England. "I did not realise how much I love this country until I went back to the States," he said.

The loan expires at the weekend, just as the Conference side are enjoying their own period of fame and Feuer, outstanding in the 0-0 draw against Leeds at Nene Park, is sifting through offers to stay in England. If nothing else, he has inherited his parents' sense of timing.

Even though the Northamptonshire club declined to accept its full entitlement of 4,300 tickets, about 3,000 supporters will make the 150-mile journey north tonight, nearly half of them in 30 official coaches. That is still 400 more than the average home attendance and David Joyce, the secretary, has heard talk of little else in the villages of Rushden and Irthlingborough.

Brian Talbot, the head coach, is playing down the prospects of his team, despite the fact that Leeds may have to press Radebe into service ahead of schedule after a knee injury because of a shortage of defenders.

Jonathan Woodgate is also very doubtful with a thigh strain, leaving David O'Leary, the Leeds manager, with only one recognised central defender, David Wetherall.

"I don't know when our injury jinx is going to let up and leave us alone," O'Leary said, "but we are an exciting cup-tie and we've got to show that we can cope with this crisis that has hit us."

Talbot said: "Leeds should have too much class and ability, but, if we can keep them out, we might get something on the counter," he said.

Feuer has a less tactical approach. "Let's just go out there and enjoy it," he said. "It's going to be a great game."



swung towards football. Showtime came to mean televised coverage of English football in bars. The family moved to California when he was 15 and soon after joining Los Angeles Salsa — a football club, not a dance troupe — he decided to try his luck in Europe.

Five years in Belgium preceded his arrival at West Ham United, but he struggled to break into the first team and moved to Luton Town. He left Kenilworth Road last summer for New England Revolution, the Major League Soccer side based in Boston, only to lose his place when Walter Zenga, the former Italy goalkeeper, arrived as player-coach.

Rushden had injuries to both their goalkeepers and offered a one-month loan while he sought a bigger club



Talbot is playing down Rushden's chances of staging an FA Cup upset against Leeds

United dampen Keane's desire

By STEPHEN WOOD AND RUSSELL KEMPSON

ROY KEANE, the Manchester United midfielder player, could be disappointed in his attempts to secure a swift resolution to the subject of his future at Old Trafford. Keane, whose contract expires at the end of the 1999-2000 season, has expressed his desire to arrange another, long-term deal immediately. Keane is also believed to be demanding a pay rise, taking his wages to around £40,000 a week.

However, Martin Edwards, the United chief executive, confirmed yesterday that the club did not want to alter its usual procedure over new contract negotiations. United open talks with players no more than 12 months before their contract is due for renewal.

"Roy still has 18 months to run on his present contract," Edwards said. "I am surprised that there is speculation already and there are no thoughts at the moment to bringing these talks forward."

The timing is very important, because we feel that contract discussions can be disruptive. We want players to concentrate on football and the proper time to sit down with Roy will be the summer. Keane has said that if the situation is not sorted out to his satisfaction, he could leave the club in the summer of 2000. That would mean that, with Keane a free agent, United would receive nothing if he

was transferred to another club. If United met Keane's financial demands, however, their wage structure would be broken, a risk that they are not prepared to take.

The FA Premier League is waiting for United to send it a full report into events on Sunday, when a power play delayed the kick-off of the FA Carling Premiership match with West Ham United by 45 minutes. Old Trafford staff have begun inquiries into the incident, although they do not anticipate completing deliberations before the weekend. They have been told already that the North Stand cannot be reopened until they have

proved that it is safe for supporters.

Chelsea's determination to hang on to their lead in the FA Carling Premiership stepped up a gear yesterday when it was revealed that they have made an enquiry for PSV Eindhoven, Gianluca Vialli, the Chelsea manager, is keen to add to his squad after a series of injuries has left him with a lack of cover, especially up front.

Chelsea would prefer the move to be on a loan basis until the end of the season, with an option to buy if it proves successful, but PSV are more interested in a permanent deal and are seeking about £3.5 million for De Bilde.

Goram goes to Fir Park

By PHIL GORDON

ANDY GORAM, the former Scotland goalkeeper, listened to the voice of reason for once in his turbulent career yesterday and joined Motherwell, the Scottish Premier League club, on the end of the season.

Goram, 34, had been offered a short-term contract by Billy Davies, the Fir Park manager, just two months ago, but resisted in order to pursue an adventure with Brian Laudrup, his former Rangers colleague, at FC Copenhagen. The Danish club ultimately rejected the talented but tempestuous Goram, who earned 42 caps for Scotland until his walk-out on the eve of the World Cup finals last June and subsequent retirement from international football.

"I will not be using Motherwell as a stepping stone," Goram insisted yesterday. "There is a verbal agreement for a further two-year contract if things go well and, hopefully, they will."

Goram, who spent seven years at Ibrox, spent two months at Sheffield United, of the Nationwide League first division, earlier in the season.

Oldham lose chairman

By STEPHEN WOOD

IAN STOTT resigned yesterday as chairman of Oldham Athletic, the Nationwide League second division club, in the wake of his claims that they were considering a merger with two other clubs in the North West.

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inadvertently embarrassed the club to such an extent that it would be in everyone's interests if I stepped down."

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handed in a transfer request, prompting Colin Todd, his manager, to accuse him of acting out of "pure greed". After months of uncertainty, Gunnlaugsson, the Iceland international, has turned down a new contract to stay with the first division club. There has been interest in the player, who has scored 14 goals this season, from Leicester City and Nottingham Forest, the FA Carling Premiership clubs, although Bolton's valuation of around £3.5 million could put any suitors off.

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TENNIS

Rusedski goes back to gym after early loss

By ALIX RAMSAY

ANOTHER week, another tournament and another first-round loss — it was not quite the start to the year that Greg Rusedski had in mind. Yesterday at the Sydney International, it was Gustavo Kuerten's turn to put the Great Britain No 2's nose out of joint, surviving a first-set pasting by Rusedski before winning 1-6, 6-3, 6-4.

Kuerten is known as a giant-killer, coming from nowhere to win the French Open, his first tournament title, two years ago. For the next year, he faded from view, but towards the end of last summer he found his touch again to win a further two titles.

Even so, Rusedski could have done without another setback so close to the Australian Open — not that he was letting on. "There's really nothing to be down about," he said. "Kuerten just played a great match."

After his defeat last week to Bernd Karbacher, the world No 124, Rusedski is now somewhat short of match-practice before the start of the first grand-slam tournament of the season — and Rusedski is a man who needs matches under his belt. Playing eight of the final ten weeks of last season, he was getting better and better, a run that led to his first Mercedes Super Nine title, beating Pete Sampras in the final of the Paris indoor event. Give the man a holiday, however, and it takes a long time to get back up to speed.

The loss has sent Rusedski scurrying back to the gym and the practice courts in an attempt to kick-start the competitive juices. Having dominated the first set, he began to wilt as the match wore on and he is determined to be physically sharper before moving on to Melbourne.

"It was one of those matches where I played better than last week but just lost," he said. Rusedski was in good company as Pat Rafter, the US Open

champion, also fell at the first hurdle. He, too, improves only through sheer hard graft. Beaten by Lleyton Hewitt, the young pretender to Rafter's position of Australia's favourite son, Rafter was outplayed 7-6, 6-1. "I was definitely underdone," he confessed.

What awaits Petr Korda in Melbourne is anybody's guess. More and more players are expressing anything from concern to outright anger that Korda has not been suspended after he provided a positive drugs test at Wimbledon last year. Rumours continue to fly and a players' boycott of the Open has been mooted. While that is unlikely, they will certainly have their say at a pre-tournament meeting at the



Rusedski: bad start to year

weekend, Korda, who looked nervous and edgy last week in Qatar, has announced that he will definitely defend his Australian Open title and, still proclaiming his innocence, will say his piece at the players' meeting.

"I will stand in front of the players. I do not have any problem to stand in front of anybody," he said. "I wanted to play in Australia because I haven't done anything. Why should I hide? I want to show the world I am still capable of playing tennis and I want to defend my title as well as I can."

SPORT IN BRIEF

Rios pulls out of Auckland event

■ TENNIS: Marcelo Rios, the men's world No 2, dropped out of the Heineken Open in Auckland yesterday, just 46 minutes into his first-round match. The Chilean, seeded No 1, suffered a recurrence of the back injury that troubled him at the end of last year and his preparation for the Australian Open, the first grand-slam tournament of the year, which starts next week, is in jeopardy. Rios won the first set of his match with Andre Pavel, of Romania, 7-5, but his service was broken early in the second game, when he failed to chase a ball on break point, and he withdrew to the dressing-room to receive treatment. Rios has never won a grand-slam title.

K Club the Ryder choice

■ GOLF: The European Ryder Cup committee is expected to confirm this week that the 2005 Cup will be hosted by the K Club in Straffan, Co Kildare. The K Club will not receive official confirmation of the decision until a press conference on Friday, but a source said that other clubs in Ireland had been told that they would not be chosen for the biennial event between Europe and the United States. Jefferson Smurfit plc, the K Club's owners, declined to comment.

Smethwick sign Wasim

■ CRICKET: Smethwick, of the Birmingham Premier League, who usually attract around 100 spectators for home matches, have signed Wasim Akram, the Pakistan captain, as their overseas professional. John Lumb, the Smethwick chairman, said: "He will have an enormous impact on the league and the city with its strong multi-racial community."

Africans go for glory

■ ATHLETICS: Daniel Komen and Haile Gebrselassie will swap distances in a bid to break each other's world indoor records at the BUPA Indoor Grand Prix in Birmingham on February 14. Komen, of Kenya, runs in the 2,000 metres and Gebrselassie, of Ethiopia, will attempt to break Komen's 5,000 metres record.

Henman's London date

■ TENNIS: Tim Henman, the world No 7, has joined Greg Rusedski, his British compatriot, in confirming that he will play in the Guardian Direct Cup in Battersea Park next month. Other leading players taking part in the ATP tournament, from February 22 to 28, include Richard Krajicek, a former Wimbledon winner, and Cedric Pioline, of France.

Murdoch is fan of Blatter proposal

By OUR SPORTS STAFF

LEADING officials of UEFA, the European football union, acted the plan to stage the World Cup every two years yesterday, saying that it would have "negative consequences" on the plan, put forward by Sepp Blatter, the president of FIFA, the game's governing body, to receive support, however, from a more unlikely source — Rupert Murdoch.

Murdoch, the chairman and chief executive of News Corporation, the parent company of *The Times*, was full of enthusiasm for the suggestion. My first reaction to that is a very good idea," Murdoch speaking at a forum on the 21st century, said. "I think the World Cup is a great international event and there's no reason why it could not be staged every two years."

If we don't have a World Cup between countries every two years, maybe it would be better to have, in between, the biennial World Cup, a triad of clubs. "He added: "Certainly, football is so strong and so popular in so many parts of the world that we should see more international competition more than every four years. I would agree with that."

However, in a statement, a "not only objected to the a, but also condemned the y the project was presented, hout prior consultation of / of the relevant bodies".

Uefa said Lennart Johansson, its president, has been critical of Blatter's plan since he floated it last weekend. His six top officials are "of the opinion that the project would produce negative consequences in sporting, medical and commercial contexts and have a damaging effect on domestic competitions."

Blatter said that staging the World Cup every two years would boost national teams, which he argued had been threatened by proposals for a breakaway league of top European clubs.

Uefa countered that by saying "there are other ways" of strengthening national teams and soccer associations. Its presidential board "noted with regret signs that the project could be a matter of personal prestige."

Fifa's Strategic Studies Committee, which can propose changes to international competitions and which is chaired by Blatter, is likely to discuss the idea this month.

Fifa has taken a step towards clearing the way to a biennial World Cup by announcing a plan to harmonise the international football calendar. A meeting will be held in Zurich on Friday with a view to reschedule continental tournaments, such as the European championship, the Copa America and the African Nations Cup, which, at present, are held in different cycles.

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FULHAM 2-0	10/1
FULHAM 2-1	9/1
FULHAM 3-0	25/1
FULHAM 3-1	20/1
FULHAM 3-2	25/1
FULHAM 0-0	8/1
FULHAM 1-1	11/2
FULHAM 2-2	14/1

Other scores on request.

11/5 DRAW

CRUICKSHANK	ODDS
FULHAM	10/3
FULHAM	14/1
FULHAM	28/1
DRAW	3/1
DRAW	4/1
DRAW	5/1
SOTON	28/1
SOTON	14/1
SOTON	10/3

SOUTHAMPTON 6/4

BEST GOALS CORNER	ODDS
11/2 HONSLAND (F)	11/2
OSTENSTAD (S)	6/1
PESCHISOLDO (F)	12/2
LEHMAN (F)	7/1
LE TISSER (S)	8/1
BRIDGE (S)	12/1
COLLINS (F)	14/1
FINNAN (F)	14/1
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Hospital beds? You must be off your trolley

Television's newest hospital drama, *Holly City* (BBC), was born from *Casualty* the way *Softly Softly* emerged from the long-running *Z Cars*, the way *Cherry* gave birth to *Fraser*, the way one Carol Vorderman show split, like an amoeba, to become two Carol Vorderman programmes and then four Carol Vorderman programmes, and then eight, then 16. Politics works in much the same way, as each of the central characters on the political stage gets a chance to make a pilot for its very own — hopefully ratings-grabbing — series.

It's a difficult — to pull off. The much-publicised Robin Cook sops, opera, which is the latest spin-off from new Labour's main storyline, merely reinforces the feeling among viewers that Downing Street has yet to get the hang of creating an appealing central character in its dramatic babies.

It's quite possible that *Holly*

City itself is a New Labour Production, since it painted a far more realistic picture of the NHS than Frank Dobson has been managing to do. There were no bed shortages. No freezer lorries in the car park filled with the overspill from the hospital morgue, no invalids sleeping on trolleys.

When, early in this opening episode, talk turned to how a donor had been located and how a team from *Holly* would have to fly to a hospital in Cornwall to collect the precious organ, many of us were expecting surgical registrar Nick Jordan (Michael French) to return to *Holly* bearing a valuable

kidney. But it turned out to be a heart. After that *Holly City*, like too many medical dramas, became confused: it momentarily thought it was part of an Open University broadcast, because we saw the heart-transplant operation in such detail that medical students could

have used it to supplement their lecture notes. And so much blood! You can only assume that someone in the props department had mistakenly over-ordered the fake blood, and that the cast decided they might as well get through the stockpile as quickly as possible.

I

REVIEW



Joe Joseph

even a bigger, valier buffoon on the box than himself.

Michael Portillo is another politician trying his hand at a solo screen career, independent of the ensemble show "Major's Madhouse" in which he first enjoyed a starring role. In *Great Railway Journeys* (BBC), the former Transport Minister chugged from Granada to Salamanca, showing us en route a side of Portillo we

hadn't seen recently: a Portillo who isn't constantly pledging to stick by William Hague in his hour of need, thereby indirectly highlighting what a mess the Tory leader is in.

Portillo takes the opportunity to remind us that his Spanish father was a poet and law professor who showed his love of social and democracy by joining the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War, while at the same time showing his love for his family by refusing to carry a gun lest he accidentally kill one of his six brothers, all of whom fought for Franco. But only a cynic (not you, sir, surely!) would see this film as part of Portillo's attempt to show us that he isn't the insistent xenophobe he is

permeated by his political enemies. "I've never been in any doubt that I'm temperamentally half Spanish," he told us, screwing his face into his distant, thoughtful expression, the one one that makes

him look as if he has eaten something distasteful and is waiting for a convenient break in waiting to spit it out. "I get emotional, and I have that Castilian concern about things like dignity and honour." But in order to show us that he had gained a new perspective on life since losing his seat in May 1997, he also related to us the sacrifices that his father had to make in order to flee fascism, leaving behind his family, his job, the country he loved — and said that they put "firmly in context the setbacks that the rest of us sometimes suffer: they are as nothing". Well, all these things may be perfectly true, but who's going to believe them when it's a politician doing the talking?

But there were nostalgic glimpses of the old Portillo we remember, shining through. Over a family lunch with his Spanish relatives, Portillo's

uncle was telling his nephew that his father was the middle of the seven brothers. "He's saying that the middle position is the position of virtue," Michael translated for the camera, adding: "It must be a Spanish expression!" It's certainly not a British politician expression — at any rate not one that would have tipped off Portillo's tongue during his *Spain* radio interview. Mark Lewis's cunning film, *Rat* (Channel 4), blended together a compendium of spooky facts about New York's rat community with a series of mini-saps in which owners of rat-infested apartments re-enacted their battles with their unwelcome guests: most lost. One exterminator from New York's Bureau of Pest Control told Lewis: "I've seen some that were the size of a racoon, and when you see that you know something's wrong." That's just empty New York bragging: in London we've been seeing rats the size of Cabinet ministers.

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7.00am BBC Breakfast News (21323)
8.00am GMT (1005665)
8.45 The Vanessa Show (T) (615433)
10.55 News: Weather (T) (7011329)
11.00am Real Roads (7021708)
11.25am Car's Cook, Won't Cook (T) (792965)
11.55 News: Weather (T) (7217961)
12.00pm Call My Bluff (6090)
12.30am Battersea Dogs' Home (94674)
1.00pm One O'Clock News (T) (24416)
1.30pm Regional News: Weather (8682665)
1.40pm Neighbours Ruth faces a professional dilemma (T) (6312481)
2.05pm Ironside A hitman is hired to do away with the carry-over before he can testify at a syndicate trial (T) (760565)
2.55pm Looking for a Song (690114)
3.20pm The Weather Show (T) (2094961)
3.25pm Children's BBC: Playdays (7191510)
3.45 Little Monsters (818095) 3.50 *ChuckleVision* (820323) 4.10 *See It Saw It* (6932495) 4.35 *The Wild House* (1864597) 5.00 *Newsround* (5401226) 5.10 *Blue Peter* (6314481)
5.35pm Neighbours (T) (703435)
6.00pm Six O'Clock News: Weather (T) (481)
6.30pm Regional News Magazine (561)
7.00pm Wildlife on an Intimate portrait of a pack of wild wolves living in the Canadian Arctic, showing how the family comes with the harsh conditions (T) (3058)
7.30pm Dream House The walls of the home are erected in time for Carol Vorderman to take a tour of the building, while Adam Woodvort rates the 'best' and worst woodworkers on the market (T) (145)
8.00pm Changing Rooms Neighbours in South Wales are challenged to reverse a room in each other's houses (T) (7870)
8.30pm Battersea Dogs' Home The actor Simon Callow introduces his ex-Battersea resident Luchter (T) (972139)
8.50pm National Lottery: Amazing Luck Stories (T) (947059)
9.00pm One O'Clock News: Regional News: Weather (T) (5077)

- 9.30pm The X-Files** Mulder and Scully reveal their own version of events leading to the death of an alleged teenage vampire. With Gillian Anderson and David Duchovny (T) (662944)
10.15pm Don't Call Us Documentaries tracing the history of the talent show (T) (60823)
10.30pm Countdown The host, Charles, gives insight into the lives of the show's high-society elite (T) (70955)
11.00pm In the Deep Woods (TV) (1982) Mystery thriller, starring Rosanna Arquette as a children's author drawn into the search for a vicious serial killer. With Anthony Hopkins. Directed by Charles Cromb (T) (414752)
11.00pm News (481153)
1.15pm BBC News 24 (5886714)

- 7.00am Children's BBC: Breakfast Show** Tales of the Tooth Fairies (8992323) 7.05 *Teletubbies* (2957400) 7.55 *The Really Wild Show* (2248394) 8.15 *Remed* (8713661) 8.15 *Taz-Mania* (5749145) 8.40 *Polka Dot Shorts* (8242435) 8.50 *Brum* (8248191) 9.00 *Daytime On Two: Environment* (7158882) 9.25 *What? When? Where? Why?* (702329) 9.25 *The Art* (6507708) 9.45 *World and Picture* (8272042) 10.00 *Children's BBC: Teletubbies* (18955) 10.30 *Daytime On Two: Numberline* (5848228) 10.45 *Cats' Eyes* (5834681) 11.00 *Around Scotland* (1506880) 11.25 *The Geography Programme* (5410771) 11.40 *Schedule 1 Action* (2242313) 12.00pm *Flavista* (408361) 12.15 *Hallo aus Berlin* (395313) 12.30 *Working Lunch* (92416) 1.00 *Brum* (7903110)
1.10pm The Arts and Crafts Hour (2428752)
2.10pm Sporting Greats (2222346)
2.40pm News: Weather (T) (892313)
2.45pm Westminster (T) (8973101)
3.55pm News: Weather (T) (890145)
4.00pm That's Entertainment Part Two (1976) Fred Astaire and Gene Kelly introduce a compilation of MGM musical and comedy highlights (T) (9435)
6.00pm Star Trek: The Next Generation Alien historians arrive to conduct research on the crew (T) (636597)
6.45pm Buffy the Vampire Slayer Buffy battles a giant praying mantis (T) (930694)
7.30pm Tales from the Riverbank insight into the life-cycle of a salmon as it journeys along Scotland's rivers (T) (97)
8.00pm Battle of the Sexes insight into "girl power" in the animal kingdom (T) (6348)
8.30pm Home Front tips on creating a mock period dining room (T) (2555)

- 9.00pm Mersey: Blues** New series offering an insight into the work of Merseybeat Police (T) (43110)
9.50pm Blood on the Carpet New series. Investigations into dodgy dealings in the commercial world (T) (285394)
10.30pm Newsnight (T) (325771)
11.15pm Trial by Jury The jury hear Mark's lover give evidence (3/3) (T) (56329)
11.55pm Weather (748416)
12.00pm Despatch Book (48443)
12.30am BBC Learning Zone: Open University: The Birth of Liquid Crystals 4.00 *Hickory Vision: 1-30 Lifelines* 2.00 *Schools: The Collection* 4.00 *Language: The New Get By in Spanish* Part 2 5.00 *Business and Training: Voluntary Matters - Achieving Your Aims* 5.30 *20 Steps to Better Management - The Art of Influence* 6.45 *Open University: Immigration, Prejudice and Ethnicity* 8.35 *The Passionate Statistician*

- 5.30am ITN Morning News** (92584)
6.00am GMTV (6897850)
9.25pm Trisha (T) (3561981)
10.30pm This Morning (T) (2415571)
12.15pm ITN News (T) (389138)
12.30pm ITN Lunchtime News (T) (18042)
1.00pm Next Stop Richard Vassell, Polly Lloyd and correspondents are in Worcester, Bassett, Wiltshire, where they review local developments (46684)
1.30pm Home and Away Sam feels unwanted (T) (15313)
2.00pm The Jerry Springer Show Outrageous American talk show (T) (2902145)
2.45pm Supermarket Sweep (T) (173455)
3.15pm ITN News Headlines (T) (2099415)
3.20pm ITN News (T) (209325)
3.25pm CTV: Mopett's Shop (206752) 3.35 *Teletubbies* (852874) 3.45 *Junior* (8454684) 4.10 *Whizzwig* (8500355)
4.40pm Moby (T) (712757)
5.10pm Action Practice Perce has a problem (8600918)
5.40pm ITN Early Evening News: Weather (T) (238226)
5.58pm ITN Crimestoppers (381503)
6.00pm Home and Away (T) (563665)
6.25pm ITN Weather (T) (51519)
6.30pm The West Tonight (T) (329)
7.00pm Emmerdale Steve and Kim take the stand (T) (1226)
7.30pm Coronation Street Les looks for a roof over his head (T) (313)

- 8.00pm Who Wants to be a Millionaire?** Big-prize game show (T) (3874)
9.30pm Police, Camera, Action! Alastair Stewart focuses on car theft (T) (9481)
9.00pm Garages From Hell Car-owners convinced they've been ripped off by unscrupulous mechanics get the chance to see their own suspects confirmed in this one-of documentary (T) (2818)
10.00pm News at Ten: Weather (T) (62787)
10.30pm ITN News and Weather (T) (454685)
10.40pm The Big Match Highlights of tonight's FA Cup third-round replays (2138325)
12.15pm Factual Deception: Mrs Lee Harvey Oswald (TV) (1993) Fact-based drama, starring Helena Bonham Carter as the wife of JFK's alleged assassin. With Frank Whaley and Robert Fico. Directed by Robert Dornheim (18828)
1.55pm The Jerry Springer Show (T) (218204)
2.40pm Masterclass The art of songwriting (2/3) (561801)
3.10pm Trisha Show earlier (T) (322542)
4.15pm Picking the Fruit: The Making of Still Crazy Behind the scenes of the comedy film (T) (9588193)
4.40pm Soundtrack Cutting-edge sounds (8642533)
4.50pm ITN News Behind the scenes of TV programmes (2503248)
5.00pm Coronation Street (T) (40482)

PAY TV: SATELLITE, CABLE AND DIGITAL

- As HTV West except:**
12.20-12.30pm Central News (6088787)
1.00pm Echo Point (46684)
1.30pm The Jerry Springer Show (937042)
2.15-2.45pm Home and Away (805464)
3.20-3.25pm Central News (2096328)
3.10-3.40pm Shortland Street (800918)
4.25-7.00pm Central News: Weather (528661)
10.30-10.40pm Central News: Weather (454665)
4.05am Central Jobfinder '99 (805898)
5.20-5.30pm Asian Eye (4242153)
As HTV West except:
12.15-12.27pm Westcountry News: Weather (639139)
12.27-12.30pm Illuminations (609670)
1.00pm Emmerdale (46684)
1.30pm The Jerry Springer Show (937042)
2.15-2.45pm Home and Away (805464)
3.20-3.25pm Westcountry News: Weather (2096328)
5.08pm Birthday People (820536)
5.10-5.40pm Home and Away (800918)
6.00-7.00pm Westcountry Live (79761)
10.30-10.40pm Westcountry News: Weather (454665)
As HTV West except:
12.15-12.30pm Meridian News: Weather (389139)
1.00-1.35pm Shortland Street (1252110)
5.10-5.40pm Home and Away (800918)
6.00pm Meridian Tonight (357)
6.30-7.00pm Birdwatch (329)
10.30-10.40pm Meridian News: Weather (454665)
5.00-5.30pm FreeScreen (40482)
As HTV West except:
12.15pm Anglia Air Watch (8904364) 12.20-12.30pm *Anglia News and Weather* (6088787) 1.00-1.35pm *Upshot* (T) (1252110) 5.10-5.40pm *Shortland Street* (800918) 6.23pm *Anglia Weather* (916349) 6.25-7.00pm *Anglia News* (T) (509601) 10.29pm *Anglia Air Watch* (825558) 10.30-10.40pm *Anglia News and Weather* (T) (454665)

- Starts: 6.00am Sesame Street** (2170055)
7.00pm The Big Breakfast (4705660) 9.00 *Yagellon: Antoine De Coures Tour de France* (1522036) 9.30 *Pat & Todd* (T) (8222639) 9.45 *Book Box* (8928145) 10.00 *Stage Two Science* (3578955) 10.15 *AI About Us* (3584705) 10.30 *The French Programme* (1736329) 10.50 *Stop, Look, Listen* (5376597) 11.00 *Dwr Aer Tir* (1802400) 11.15 *Teletubbies* (852874) 11.20 *Powerhouse* (T) (2451145) 12.00pm *Switched* (T) (2451145) 12.30pm *Sesame Street* (3887874) 1.00 *Planned Plant* (T) (Fwrd a n) (5443348) 1.15 *MHR* (54437503) 1.30 *FILM: The Bishop's Wife* (T) (9992955) 1.30 *Hampton Court Palace* (T) (5235491) 4.00 *Fillies to One* Highlights (T) (56377416) 4.30 *Fiddlers* (T) (5623400) 5.00 *Planned Plant* (2768090) 5.30 *Countdown* (T) (5624752) 6.00 *Newyddion* (T) (9163042) 6.10 *Heno* (T) (5627238) 7.00 *Pebol y Cwm* (T) (725446) 7.30 *Newyddion* (T) (9163042) 8.00 *Pebol* (1084351) 9.00 *ER* (T) (7732524) 10.00 *Brookside* (T) (54052042) 10.35 *ER* (T) (3635136) 11.30 *Mark Thomas Comedy* (3675961) 12.00am *Comedy Lab* (9872511) 12.25 *Football: Manchester United* (81616) 3.00 *Trans World Sport* (14445240) 4.00 *Dwedd*

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- 11.00pm Mark Thomas Comedy** Product New series. Topical observations from comedy writer Mark Thomas, featuring stand-up performances and ludicrous real-life hoaxes (T) (915706)
11.30pm Comedy Lab Jason Vines (74135)
**12.00pm Board Stupid (T) (556178)
12.35pm Football Italian: Manchester Round-up of last week's action (3488104)
3.00pm Trans World Sport Global action (38191)
4.00pm Submarine Patrol (1938) Comedy adventure, starring Preston Foster as a disgraced US Navy officer put in charge of a run-down wooden vessel and its motley crew during the First World War. Directed by John Ford (151882)**

PAY TV: SATELLITE, CABLE AND DIGITAL

- 6.00am 5 News and Sport** With Becky Anderson (7800145)
7.00pm World Part four. How marine creatures have evolved (T) (9005348)
**7.30pm Miltank (4693531)
**7.35pm Wildlife's House (T) 5 News Update (972961)
**8.00pm Havalakoo (T) (1096752)
**8.30pm Deppledown Farm (T) 5 News Update (1095023)
**9.00pm Hot Property (T) (2772435)
**9.25pm Russell Grant's Postcards (749690)
**9.30pm The Oprah Winfrey Show (6455597)
**10.20pm Sunset Beach Caitlin leaves Cole (T) (216145)
**11.10pm Lezza (T) (933771)
**12.00pm 5 News at Noon (T) (1006139)
12.30pm Family Affairs Jamie leaves home (T) (T) 5 News Update (987298)
1.00pm The Bold and the Beautiful James offers Sheila a place to stay (T) (9004619)
1.30pm The Roseanne Show The outrageous comedienne chats with Joan Collins; 5 News Update (9871139)
**2.00pm 100 Per Cent Gold (6292139)
2.30pm Good Afternoon Daily entertainment, featuring word game Cryptogram, real-life soap Liverpool Mums and Selling the Family Silver, with Eric Knowles; 5 News Update (4557593)
3.30pm Just Dancers The Big Trade (TV) (1981) The private investigator attempts to unravel the truth behind the mysterious killing of a rising movie star on the set of his latest film. Thriller, starring Robert Blake. Directed by Reza Badji (9583394)
**5.20pm Sunset Beach Sunnier earlier (T) (T) 5 News Update (6017023)
**6.00pm 100 Per Cent Computer-generated quiz (522346)
6.30pm Family Affairs Anis confesses her true feelings (T) (5137400)
**7.00pm 5 News: Weather Round-up of the day's stories, including First on Five (T) (5298565)
7.30pm Champions of the Wild Dr Colin Chapman's efforts to save Uganda's beleaguered chimpanzees from harm (T) 5 News Update (613364)
8.00pm PRINCE Wings and a Prayer New series of the hard-hitting legal drama. Kate Buffery, George Inyang and Dominic Matham star (T) (T) 5 News Update (5464752)
**9.00pm Hostile Force (1995) A petty criminal organises a bank heist, but fails for a former policeman he takes hostage during the raid — will their new-found friendship hold her from failing his plan? Action thriller, starring Andrew McCarthy, Cynthia Geary and Wolf Larson. Directed by Michael Kennedy (T) 5 News Update (12243936)
10.50pm Melinda's Big Night In With Tara-Palmer Tomkinson (345170)
11.30pm Strange Luck Chance helps a would-be hockey star shake off his hangover threatening to kill his hockey (9701416)
12.25pm NHL: American Ice Hockey Phoenix Coyotes at Buffalo Sabres (4650373)
4.40pm Club Class Comedy show (T) (72542608)
**5.05pm Move on Up (T) (8552849)
5.30pm 100 Per Cent (T) (46********************************

